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THOUGHTS

ON

SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS,

TRANSLATED

FROM THE WRITINGS OF FENELON.



BOSTON:
SAMUEL G. SIMPKINS.
1843.

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PREFACE.

As the spiritual works of Fenelon have become extensively known among us through Mrs. Follen's valuable Selections, and are so highly valued, it is hoped that this additional volume of Translations may not be unacceptable. They are taken from the third volume of his *Œuvres Spirituelles*, and consist in the original of detached chapters on various topics relating to the spiritual life. Some of them seem originally to have been written as letters, being apparently addressed to individuals; though

this is not indicated in their titles. I have occasionally taken whole chapters, sometimes parts only, omitting such portions as sentiment, taste, or other reasons, led me to reject. But I have by no means thought it necessary to omit what was not in accordance with my own views or feelings, especially as it is the spirit pervading the writings of Fenelon, and not the particular opinions expressed or implied, that gives to them their value. As most of these extracts have at some time interested my own mind, and as they portray so deep and varied internal experience, it has seemed to me that they might interest others also, and be suited to various spiritual conditions and wants.

In translating, it has been my aim to keep near the original, both in spirit and form, and retain the peculiarities of expression, as far as could well be done ; and with

this view I have chosen occasionally, some degree of harshness, and perhaps even incorrectness of expression, rather than sacrifice these. If some of the language of the portions here selected be objected to, as singular, not sanctioned by common use, on such subjects, and not easily understood, let it be considered that it was the phraseology in use among the religious of Fenelon's age and church; and moreover, that it relates to a region of thought and sentiment whose profound and delicate experiences are not easily stated in common language and to the apprehension of all, but require a corresponding taste and experience in order to be understood. Thus parts which will seem, to some, beautiful and profound statements of religious truths, to others may seem extravagant fancies, or subtle refinements of ascetic piety. It is proper to state that parts of the chapter on Prayer and the Principal Exercises of

Piety, are contained in Mrs. Follen's volume of Selections ; they are retained here as they could not well be omitted without leaving out also other parts of the same chapter not translated in her work.

THE TRANSLATOR.

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TRANSLATIONS FROM FENELON.

TRANSLATIONS FROM FENELON.

THAT GOD IS NOW LITTLE KNOWN.

WHAT men are most in want of, is the knowledge of God. They become acquainted, after much reading; with a certain series of miracles and marks of Providence, by the facts of history; they have made serious reflections upon the corruption and frailty of the world; they have even become convinced of certain maxims useful for the reformation of their conduct with reference to their salvation, but all this edifice wants foundation; this body of piety and Christianity is without soul. That which should animate the true believer is the idea of God, who

is all, who does all, and to whom all is due. He is infinite in all, in wisdom, in power, in love. We should not be astonished, therefore, if all that comes from him, possesses this character of infinite and surpasses human reason. When he prepares and arranges aught, his counsels and his ways are, as the scripture says, as far above our counsels and ways as the heaven is above the earth. When he would execute what he has resolved, his power is shown by no effort, for there is no effect however great, that is less easy to him than the most common ; it has cost him no more to draw from nothing the heaven and earth, such as we see them, than to make a river run down its natural course, or to let a stone fall from above. His power is found entire in his will ; he has only to will, and things are at once done. If the scriptures represent him as speaking in creation, it is not that he had need of a word proceeding from him, to make all his will understood by the nature he wished to produce. This word that the scriptures represent to us, is entirely simple and interior ; it is the thought he has had of creating things, and the purpose he has formed in the depths of his own being. This thought

has been fruitful, and without going forth from him, has drawn from him as the source of all beings, all those which compose the universe. His mercy, in like manner, is nothing else than his pure will. He has loved us before the creation of the world; he has seen us, he has known us and prepared for us his blessings. He has loved and chosen us from eternity. When any new blessing comes to us, it flows from this same original source; God has never any new will with regard to us; he does not change; it is we who change. When we are just and good we are conformed and agreeable to him; when we forsake justice, when we cease to be good, we cease to be conformed to him and to please him. He is an immutable rule, which the changing creature approaches and departs from successively. His justice against the bad and his love for the good are but the same thing; it is the same goodness that unites itself with all that is good, and which is incompatible with all that is bad. As for mercy, it is the goodness of God, that finding us evil wishes to render us good. This mercy, that is felt by us in time, is in its source an eternal love of God for his creatures. He alone gives the true good-

ness — woe to the presumptuous soul that hopes to find it in itself. It is the love that God has for us that gives us all. But the greatest gift that he can grant us, is to give us the love that we ought to have for him. When God loves us so far as to cause us to love him, he reigns in us ; he becomes our life, our peace, our happiness, and we begin already to live his blessed life. This love that he has for us bears an infinite character ; He loves not like us with a limited and straitened love ; when he loves, all the proceedings of his love are infinite.

* * * *

ADVICE WITH REGARD TO PRAYER, AND THE
PRINCIPAL EXERCISES OF PIETY.

THE purest prayer is nothing else than the love of God. The excellence of this prayer consists not in the multitude of the words we pronounce, for God knows, without the need of our words, our inmost feelings. The true asking then is that of the heart, and the heart asks only by its

desires. To pray then is to desire, but to desire what God would have us desire. He who desires not from the depths of his heart, makes a fallacious prayer. If he should pass whole days in uttering prayers, in meditation, or in exciting himself to pious sentiments, he does not truly pray, if he does not desire what he asks. Oh how few there are who pray ! For where are those who desire the true blessings ? These blessings are exterior and interior crosses, humiliation, renunciation of one's own will, death to one's self, the reign of God on the ruins of self-love. Not to desire these things is not to pray ; and to pray, it is necessary to desire them seriously, really, constantly, and in reference to the whole detail of life ; otherwise prayer is only an illusion, like a beautiful dream, in which the unhappy person rejoices, thinking that he possesses a felicity that is far from him. Alas ! how many souls full of themselves, and of an imaginary desire of perfection in the midst of all their voluntary imperfections, who have never prayed this true prayer of the heart.

On the contrary we never cease to pray, so long as we do not cease to have the true love, and the true desire in the heart. The love hid-

den in the depths of the soul prays without ceasing, even when the mind cannot be in actual attention : God ceases not to regard in this soul, the desire that himself forms there, and which the soul itself does not always perceive. This desire in the disposition touches the heart of God ; it is a secret voice that attracts without ceasing his mercies, it is that spirit that groans in us, as St. Paul says, “ with groanings that cannot be uttered, and it helps our infirmity.”

This love entreats God to give us what we want, and to have less regard to our frailty, than to the sincerity of our intentions. This love removes even our slight faults, and purifies us like a consuming fire ; it asks in us, and for us, that which is according to the will of God. For not knowing what we ought to ask for, we should often ask what would be hurtful to us ; we should ask certain fervors, sensible satisfactions, and certain apparent excellencies, that would only serve to nourish in us the natural life, and confidence in our own strength ; whereas, on the other hand, this love by leading us, by giving us up to all the operations of grace, and putting us in a state of entire surrender with regard to all

that God shall will to do in us, disposes us for all the secret designs of God.

Then we wish all, and we wish nothing. What God shall will to give us is precisely what we shall have wished ; for we wish all that he wills, and only what he wills. Thus this state contains all prayer. It is an operation of the heart that embraces every desire. The spirit asks in us what the Spirit itself wills to give us. Then *even* when we are occupied without, and the necessary engagements of life produce in us an unavoidable distraction, we bear always within us a fire which is not extinguished, but which on the contrary nourishes a secret prayer, that is like a lamp burning without ceasing, before the throne of God. If we sleep, our heart wakes. Blessed those whom the Lord shall find watching.

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As for the time of prayer it should be regulated by one's leisure, by the occupation, the disposition, and the drawings, of each person.

Meditation is not prayer, but it is its essential foundation. It serves to fill us with the truths that God has revealed to us. It is necessary therefore to know deeply, not only all the

mysteries of Jesus Christ, and the truths of his gospel, but moreover all that these truths ought to impress on us personally in order to regenerate us.

These truths must penetrate us a long time, as the dye is gradually imbibed by the wool we would color.

They must become familiar to us, so that by seeing them near to us, and at every hour, we may be accustomed to judge of nothing, except by them ; and they be our only light by which to judge in practice, as the rays of the sun are the only light for perceiving the figure and color of all bodies.

When these truths have thus become incorporated, so to speak, in us, our prayer begins to be real and fruitful. Till then it was but the shadow of prayer ; we thought that we had a profound view of these truths, and yet we did not go beyond the outside. All our most lively and tender sentiments, all our firmest resolutions, all our clearest and most distinct views, were yet but a poor and unformed germ of what God develops in us.

When His divine light begins to enlighten us, we see in the true light ; then there is no truth

in which we do not acquiesce at once; as we have no need to reason in order to acknowledge the brightness of the sun, as soon as it rises, and strikes our eyes. Our union with God in prayer, then, must be the fruit of our fidelity in following his will; it is thereby that we can judge of our love for him.

Meditation must become every day more and more profound and inward. I say profound, because when we meditate humbly on these truths, we go deeper and deeper into them to discover in them new treasures. I add inward, because as we go deeper and deeper in order to enter into these truths, they also sink deeper, so as to enter even into the substance of our souls. Then a single word, quite simply spoken, penetrates deeper than whole discourses.

The same things that had been heard a hundred times coldly and without any fruit, nourish the soul with a hidden manna, and which has multiplied and varied tastes for days together. Indeed, we must take care not to cease to nourish ourselves with certain truths by which we have been touched. Whilst there remains still any relish to us, while they still have any thing to give us, it is a certain sign that we need to

receive from them. They nourish us even without any precise and distinct instruction ; they are something which effects more than all reasonings. We see a truth, we love it, we repose upon it, it strengthens the heart, it detaches us from ourselves, and here we should abide in peace as long as we can.

In time, our reflections and reasonings gradually diminish — affectionate sentiments, touching views and desires increase. This is an evidence, that we have been sufficiently instructed and convinced by the spirit. The heart enjoys, is nourished, is warmed, is inflamed. A word only is necessary to occupy us a long time.

At last, prayer goes on growing by views constantly more simple, and fixed, so that we no longer have need of so great a multitude of objects and considerations. We are with God as with a friend. At first one has a thousand things to say to his friend, and a thousand things to ask him ; but afterward this detail of conversation is exhausted without our being able to exhaust the pleasure of the intercourse. We have said all ; but without speaking it is a pleasure to be together, to see each other, to feel that we are near, to repose in the enjoyment of a sweet

and pure friendship. We are silent, but in this silence understand each other. We know that we agree in all, and that the two hearts are but one. The one is poured without ceasing into the other. It is thus that in prayer the intercourse with God becomes a simple and familiar union that is beyond all discourse. But it is necessary that God only should of himself effect this sort of prayer in us, and nothing would be more rash, or more dangerous than to venture to introduce one's self into it.

ON HUMILITY.

How great a help is Humiliation for the progress of a soul that truly supports it! We find in it a thousand blessings for ourselves, and for our conduct toward others,—for our Lord gives his grace to the humble.

Humility enables us to bear with others. The view of our own miseries can alone render us compassionate and indulgent toward those of others.

Two considerations taken together will produce humility ; the first is the abyss of misery from which the powerful hand of God has rescued us, and over which he still holds us as it were suspended in the air ; the second is the presence of that God who is all.

It is only by seeing God, and loving him without ceasing, that we forget ourselves, that we become disabused with regard to that nothing which had dazzled us, and accustomed to humble ourselves with consolation before that lofty majesty, in which all is swallowed up. Let us love God and we shall be humble. Let us love God, and we shall no longer love ourselves with an inordinate love. Let us love God and we shall love all that he would have us love, from the love of him.

The faults most difficult to bear turn to good, if we use them to humble ourselves, without relaxing our efforts to correct ourselves. Discouragement remedies nothing ; it is only a despair of vexed self-love. The true way to profit by the humiliation of our faults is to see them in all their deformity, without losing hope in God, and without ever hoping any thing of ourselves. We need most deeply to be humbled by our

faults; it is only thereby that God will crush our pride, and confound our presumptuous wisdom. When God shall have taken away all resource in ourselves, he will erect his edifice; until then he will cast down all, making use even of our faults. Let us give ourselves up to him; let us work humbly, without promising ourselves anything from our own strength alone.

We ought to bear with ourselves without self-flattery or discouragement. This is a mean rarely found. We are apt to promise ourselves much from ourselves and our good intention, or else despair of all. Let us hope nothing from ourselves; let us expect all of God. The despair of our own weakness, which is incorrigible, and unreserved confidence in the omnipotence of God, are the true foundations of the spiritual edifice.

It is a false humility, whilst we acknowledge ourselves unworthy of the mercies of God, not to dare to expect them with confidence. True humility consists in seeing all our own unworthiness, and remaining abandoned to God, not doubting that he can effect in us the greatest things. If God for his purposes needed to find the foundations already laid, we should have

reason to think that our sins had destroyed all, and that we are unworthy of being chosen by the divine wisdom. But God needs not to find anything in us; he can never find any thing but that which he has placed there by his grace. We might say even, that he is pleased to choose the unfaithful soul and void of all good, to make it the most proper subject to receive his mercies; it is in such they are pleased to flow, to manifest themselves more sensibly. Those sinful souls which have never felt aught in themselves but infirmities, can attribute to themselves nothing of the gifts of God. It is thus that God chooses as St. Paul says, the weakest things of the world to confound the mighty. Let us not fear then, that our unfaithfulness can render us unworthy of the mercy of God; nothing is so worthy of his mercy as a great misery. He came from heaven to earth for sinners, and not for the righteous; he came to seek what was lost without him; the physician seeks the sick and not the well. O how God loves those who present themselves with their most soiled and tattered garments, and who ask of him as of a father a garment worthy of him!

You wish that God should show you a mild

and smiling countenance, that you may become familiar with him ; and I tell you that when you shall open simply your heart with an entire familiarity, you will be no longer troubled about the countenance he shows you. Let him show you as long as he shall please a countenance severe and displeased, submit peaceably to his will ; he never loves so much as when he threatens — for he threatens only to prove, to humble, to detach. Is it the consolation only that God gives which you seek, or God himself, without sensible solace that your heart seeks ? If it is the consolation only, you love God not from the love of him, but for the love of yourself. In that case you deserve nothing of him ; if on the contrary you seek God purely, you find him still more when he tries you, than when he consoles. When he consoles, you have reason to fear being more attached to his delights, than to himself ; when he treats you rudely, if you cease not to remain united to him, it is to him alone that you cling. Alas ! how apt are we to deceive ourselves ; we are intoxicated with a vain consolation when we are supported by a sensible enjoyment ; we imagine ourselves already ravished into the third heaven, and yet

nothing substantial is accomplished. But when we are in a cold and naked faith, we are discouraged ; but in truth it is at such times that all progress is made, provided we are not discouraged. Yield yourself up then to the purposes of God ; it is not for you to regulate the treatment you should receive from him ; he knows better than you what you need ; you deserve indeed to experience a little coldness, and trial — endure them patiently. God does on his side what is suitable for him when he repulses you ; on your side do also what you ought ; which is to love him without expecting him on his part to manifest any sensible love. Even if he shall not soften, you should abandon yourself to his righteous conduct, and adore his designs of making you expire forsaken on the cross, with his well beloved Son, to crown you afterward in heaven with him. This is the solid bread of pure faith, and the generous love with which you ought to nourish your soul, and which will render it robust and vigorous. Persons truly humble cannot hear without surprise what tends to raise them. Those who truly possess this virtue, are gentle and peaceable, have a heart contrite and humbled, inclined to mercy and

compassion ; they are tranquil, cheerful, obedient, vigilant, full of fervor and incapable of contradiction ; they always put themselves in the lowest rank, they rejoice when they are despised, regard all others as above them ; they are indulgent to the weakness of others in view of their own, and are very far from preferring themselves to any one. It is by the trial of humiliation, and contempt, that we can know if we make progress in humility.

ON PRAYER.

WE are tempted to believe that we no longer pray to God, when we cease to taste a certain pleasure in prayer. That we may be undeceived, we should consider that perfect prayer and the love of God are the same thing.

Prayer then is not a sweet sensation, nor the charm of an excited imagination, nor the illumination of mind which easily discovers in God sublime truths, nor even a certain solace in the contemplation of God : all these things are ex-

terior gifts, without which love can subsist so much the more purely, as by being deprived of all these things which are but gifts of God, we shall become attached solely and immediately to Himself. This is the love of pure faith, which is desolation to nature, because it leaves it no support ; it thinks that all is lost, while it is by this very means that all is gained.

Pure love is in the will alone. Thus it is not a love of sentiment, for the imagination has no part in it ; it is a love that loves, so to speak, without feeling, as pure faith believes without seeing. We need not fear that this love may be imaginary, for nothing is less so, than the will detached from all imagination. The more purely intellectual and spiritual are its operations, the more they have not only the reality but the perfection that God demands. Its operation is therefore more perfect, at the same time that faith is exercised in it, and humility preserved.

Then the love is chaste ; for it is God in himself and for himself, and not the feelings he imparts, to which we are attached ; we follow him but it is not for the multiplied loaves. — What, it will be said, shall all piety be made to consist in a will to be united to God, which, perhaps

may be rather a thought and an imagination, than an effective will ?

If this will is not supported by fidelity on all important occasions, I will not believe it to be true ; for the good tree bears good fruits, and this will ought to render us attentive to accomplish the will of God. But it is compatible in this life with little frailties that God suffers the soul to fall into, in order to humble it. If then we experience only these occasional frailties, we should gain from them the fruit of humiliation without being discouraged. But, indeed, true virtue and true courage are in the will alone. Is it not much to wish always the sovereign good as soon as we see it ; to turn back our intention toward it, whenever we perceive that it is turned aside from it ; never deliberately to wish any thing except in accordance with it, and finally to remain submissive in the spirit of sacrifice, and self-surrender to it, when we no longer enjoy sensible consolation ? Do you count it nothing to suppress all the uneasy reflections of self-love, to go on always without anxiously seeking to see where we are going, and without stopping ; never to think of ourselves with complacency, or at least never to think of ourselves

except as we would of another, in order to fulfil a necessary duty in the present moment without looking farther? Is it not thus that the death of the old man within us is accomplished, rather than by fine reflections in which we are occupied still with ourselves, through self-love, and rather, too, than by many exterior works about which we might have satisfactory evidence of our advancement?

It is by a kind of unfaithfulness to the attraction of pure faith, that we wish always to be assured that we do well; it is wishing to know what we are doing; which we never shall know, and which God would not have us know; it is amusing ourselves upon the way, with reasoning about the way itself. The surest and shortest way is to renounce, to forget, to abandon ourselves, and through fidelity to God think no more about ourselves. All religion consists only in going out of ourselves and our self-love to tend to God.

As for involuntary distractions, they do not turn aside our love, since it is in the will, and the will never suffers distractions, when it does not choose to have them. As soon as they are observed, we dismiss them and turn toward God.

Thus, while the exterior senses of the spouse are asleep, her heart wakes, her love does not languish. A tender father does not always think distinctly of his son ; a thousand objects attract his imagination and his thoughts ; but his distractions never interrupt his paternal love ; whenever his son comes into his mind he loves him, and feels at the bottom of his heart that he has not ceased for a single moment to love him, although he has ceased to think of him. Such should be our love for our Heavenly Father ; a simple love without distrust, and without uneasiness.

If our imagination wanders, if our mind is drawn away, let us not be troubled ; all these powers are not the true man of the heart, the hidden man of whom St. Peter speaks, which is in the incorruptibility of a modest and quiet spirit. We have only to make a good use of our free thoughts by turning them always towards the presence of the Beloved, without making ourselves uneasy about the others ; it is for God to increase when he shall please, this sensible facility of preserving his presence. Often he deprives us of it for our advancement, for this facility amuses us by too many reflections ; which are the real distractions that inter-

rupt the simple and direct view of God, and thereby take us out of the darkness of pure faith.

We often seek in these reflections the repose of self-love, and satisfaction in the testimony we wish to render to ourselves. Thus we are distracted by this sensible fervor. And, on the contrary, we never pray so purely as when we are tempted to believe that we no longer pray. Then we fear that we do not pray aright, but we ought only to fear giving ourselves up to the desolation of timorous nature, to the philosophical infidelity which always wishes to demonstrate to itself its own operations in faith, and finally to impatient desires, of seeing and feeling in order to be consoled. There is no penitence more bitter than this state of pure faith without sensible support ; from which I conclude that it is the penitence, the most effective, the most crucifying, the most exempt from all illusion. Strange temptation ! we desire impatiently sensible consolation, from fear of not being penitent enough ! Ah, why do we not take for a penance the renunciation of the consolation we are so much tempted to seek ?

Finally, we should remember Jesus Christ

whom his Father abandoned on the cross ; God withdrew all feeling and all reflection to hide himself from Jesus Christ ; this was the last blow of the hand of God that smote the man of grief. It was this that completed the sacrifice. We should never abandon ourselves so entirely to God, as when he seems to abandon us. Let us then take the light and consolation when he imparts them ; but without being too much attached to them. When he plunges us in the night of pure faith, let us resign ourselves to this darkness in which all is agony. One moment is worth a thousand, in this tribulation. We are troubled and we are at peace. Not only God hides himself, but he hides us from ourselves that all may be in faith. We feel discouraged ; and yet we have an immoveable will, that wishes every thing painful that God wills. We wish all, we accept all, even the trouble by which we are tried. Thus we are secretly at peace, by that will which is preserved in the depths of the soul, in the bitterest of its troubles. Blessed be God ! who effects in us so great things, notwithstanding our unworthiness.

ON MEDITATION.

It is certain that when we have laid a solid foundation of an entire conversion of the heart, of a strict penitence, and of a serious meditation of all the virtues of Christianity, in detail and with relation to practice, we by degrees become so accustomed to all these truths, that at last we have a fixed and simple view of them, without being obliged to recommence, continually, the work of convincing ourselves of each one in particular. Then these truths are all united in a certain apprehension of God, so pure and so intimate, that we find all in him. In this state, it is not so much the mind seeking and reasoning, as the will loving and absorbed in the infinite good. But this state is not yours. You must go on for a long time in the way of sinners who are beginning to seek God ; ordinary meditation is your portion. Too happy that God deigns to admit you to this.

Go forward then in spirit, like Abraham, without knowing whither you are going. Content yourself with the daily bread, and remem-

ber that in the desert the manna that was gathered for more than one day, was corrupted at once. So true is it that the children of God should confine themselves within the order of present graces, without wishing to anticipate the designs of Providence with regard to them.

Meditate, then (since it is now for you the time for meditation,) on all the mysteries of Jesus Christ and all the truths of the Gospel, so long unknown and contradicted by you. When God shall have completely effaced in you, the impression of all worldly maxims, and when the spirit of Jesus Christ shall leave within you no trace of your former prejudices, then it will be necessary to examine the tendency that grace shall give you, and follow it step by step, without anticipating it. In the mean time, remain in peace in the bosom of God as a little child in the lap and arms of its mother. Content yourself with thinking of your subjects of meditation in a simple and easy manner. Give yourself up gently to the truths that shall affect you and which you feel are nourishing to your heart.

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You should give to each truth time to take deep root in the heart. The essential point is to love. Nothing causes so great indigestion as to eat much and hastily. Digest then, at leisure, each truth if you wish to draw from it the means of nourishing yourself; but with no uneasy reflections upon yourself. Reckon that your prayer will be good only so far as you make it without being excited and anxious. I well know that you will not fail to experience distractions of mind. But you have only to support them without impatience, and allow them to disappear, so as to remain attentive to your subject, whenever you perceive the wandering of your imagination. Thus these involuntary distractions will not injure you; and the patience with which you shall endure them without being discouraged, will advance you more than a luminous prayer in which you may take more delight. The true way to conquer these distractions, is not to attack them directly and with vexation, nor to be discouraged either at their length or their frequency.

ON SELF RENUNCIATION.

IF you would understand well what it is to renounce one's self, you have only to remember the difficulty you felt within yourself, and which you showed quite naturally, when I spoke of counting for nothing that *me* which is so dear to us. To renounce self is to count ourselves as nothing ; and whoever feels the difficulty of this, has already comprehended in what consists this renunciation against which all nature revolts. Since you have felt the stroke, you must have found the diseased part of your heart. It is for you to yield to the all powerful hand of God, which will be able to tear you from yourself.

The essence of our distemper is that we love ourselves with a blind love which amounts to idolatry. All that we love without, we love only for ourselves. We must undeceive ourselves with regard to all those generous friendships in which we appear to forget ourselves, so as to think only of the persons to whom we are attached. When we do not seek a base and coarse interest in the intercourse of friendship, we

seek another interest which in being more delicate, more concealed, and more worthy in the eyes of the world, is for this reason only the more dangerous, and more capable of poisoning us by nourishing better our self-love.

We seek then in these friendships which appear to others and ourselves so generous and so disinterested, the pleasure of loving without interest, and of rising by this noble sentiment above all weak hearts, and which are attached to sordid interest. Besides this testimony that we wish to render to ourselves to flatter our pride, we seek also in the world the glory of disinterestedness and generosity ; we seek to be loved by our friends, although we do not seek their services. We hope that they will be charmed by all that we do for them without reference to self. And in this very way we find that reference to self that we seemed to abandon ; for what is there more sweet and flattering to a considerate and refined self-love than to see itself applauded, so as not to pass for self-love.

We see a person who is wholly devoted to others and not at all to himself, the delight of virtuous people, gentle, and seemingly forgetful

of self. Self-forgetfulness is so great, that self-love even wishes to imitate it, and finds no glory like that of not appearing to seek any. This moderation and detachment from self, that would be the death of nature if it were a real and effective sentiment, becomes on the contrary, the most subtle, and imperceptible aliment of a pride that despises all the ordinary means of elevating itself, and which wishes to trample under foot all the grosser subjects of vanity, by which the rest of mankind are puffed up. But it is easy to unmask this modest pride, although in no aspect it shows itself to be pride, so entirely it seems to have renounced all that which flatters others. If it is condemned, it receives the condemnation with impatience ; if those whom it loves and serves, do not pay it with friendship, esteem, and confidence, it is touched to the quick. You see thus it is not disinterested though it strives to appear so ; it is indeed not paid with a coin so gross as others ; it requires neither insipid praises, nor money, nor the fortune which consists in offices and exterior dignities ; it wishes nevertheless to be paid — it is greedy of the esteem of virtuous people ; it wishes to love, in short, that others may love it and be touched with its

disinterestedness ; it appears to forget itself only the better to draw the regard of all others to itself. It does not indeed make all these reflections in an explicit way ; it does not say I wish to deceive every body by my disinterestedness, in order that all may love and admire me. No it would not venture to say to itself things so gross and unworthy. But it deceives itself while deceiving others ; it looks at itself with complacency in its disinterestedness, as a beautiful woman in a mirror. The person is affected with a tender feeling toward himself, seeing himself more sincere, and disinterested than the rest of men. The illusion that he sheds upon others is reflected upon himself. He passes himself off upon others, only for what he thinks himself to be, that is, disinterested ; and this is the very thing which flatters him most.

If we will examine ourselves with any degree of seriousness, to observe what saddens and what flatters us, we shall easily perceive that pride has different tastes, according as it is more gross or more delicate. But pride, whatever may be its taste, is always pride, and that which appears the most moderate and the most reasonable, is the most diabolical. For in esteeming

itself it despises others, it pities people who take delight in foolish vanities. It knows the emptiness of greatness, and of the highest ranks. It cannot endure people who are intoxicated with their fortune, it wishes by its moderation to be above fortune itself, and thereby to gain for itself a new degree of elevation, to leave at its feet all the false glory of the human race. It wishes like Lucifer, to become like the Most High. The man wishes to be a kind of divinity above the passions and interests of men ; and he does not perceive that he puts himself above men by this deceitful pride that blinds us.

Let us conclude, then, that it is the love of God alone which can carry us out of ourselves. If the powerful hand of God does not sustain us, we cannot set our foot, or take a step out of ourselves. There is no middle way ; we must refer all to God, or to ourselves. If we refer all to ourselves, we have no other God than that self of which I have said so much ; if on the contrary we refer all to God, we are in the true order ; and then regarding ourselves only as we do other creatures, without any interest of our own, and with the sole view of fulfilling the

will of God, we enter into that renunciation of self which you wish to comprehend.

But once more, nothing would close your heart so much against the grace of renunciation as that philosophical pride, and that self-love disguised as generosity, which you ought to suspect in yourself on account of the natural tendency and habit you have that way. The more one has in his natural disposition a ground of frankness, disinterestedness, pleasure in doing good, delicacy of sentiment, relish for sincerity and disinterested friendship, the more he ought try to keep self clear of self, and fear to please himself with his natural gifts.

What makes it impossible for any creature to deliver us from ourselves is, that there is none that deserves that we should prefer it to ourselves. There is none that has either the right to take us from ourselves, or the perfection that would be necessary to attach us to itself without reference to ourselves ; or, finally, the power of satisfying our hearts in this attachment. Thence it comes that we love nothing out of ourselves, except with reference to self. We choose, either according to our gross and brutal passions, if we are brutal and gross ; or according

to the relish our pride has for glory, if we have delicacy enough not to content ourselves with what is brutal and gross.

But God does two things that he alone can do. The one is to show himself to us with all his rights over his creatures, and with all the charms of his goodness. We feel that we have not made ourselves, and that thus we are not made for ourselves ; that we are made for the glory of Him who has been pleased to make us ; that he is too great to make any thing except for himself, and that thus all our perfection and all our happiness is to love ourselves in him.

This is what no creature, however dazzling, can ever make us feel for itself. Very far from finding in it that infinity which fills and transports us in God, we always find, on the contrary, in the creature, a void and incapacity to fill our hearts, a degree of perfection which allows us constantly to fall back into ourselves.

The second miracle that God performs, is, to move our hearts according to his pleasure, after having enlightened our minds. He does not content himself with showing himself infinitely lovely ; but he causes himself to be loved by

producing by his grace, his love in our hearts. Thus he himself accomplishes in us what he makes us see we owe to him.

You will say perhaps that you would like to know, in a more distinct and detailed manner, what it is thus to renounce self.

I will try to satisfy you.

We easily comprehend that we ought to renounce criminal pleasures, unjust fortunes, and gross vanities ; because the renunciation of all these things consists in a contempt which rejects them absolutely, and which condemns all enjoyment of them. But it is not as easy to comprehend the renunciation of goods lawfully acquired, and the enjoyment of a virtuous and modest life ; and finally, of the honors which come from a good reputation, and a virtue that rises above envy.

What makes it difficult to understand that these things must be renounced is, that we should not reject them with abhorrence ; but, on the contrary must preserve them, in order to make use of them according to the condition in which Divine Providence places us.

We have need of the consolations of a pleasant and peaceful life as a solace in the troubles of

our condition. As for honors, regard should be had to the decencies and proprieties of life. It is necessary to keep our possessions for the supply of our wants. How then renounce all these things while we are occupied with the care of preserving them ?

We must, without passion, do moderately what we can to preserve these things in order to make a sober use of them, and not wish to enjoy them, and set our heart upon them.

I say a sober use, because when we do not attach ourselves to a thing with passion, to enjoy it and seek in it our happiness, we take of it, what we cannot help taking, as you see a wise and faithful steward studies to take of the goods of his master, only what is precisely necessary for his true needs.

Thus the way to renounce bad things is to reject the use of them with abhorrence, and the way to renounce what is good is never to use it but with moderation, for our wants, studying at the same time to retrench all the imaginary wants with which greedy nature wishes to please itself.

Remark, that it is necessary to renounce not only bad things, but good ones also ; for Jesus

Christ says, without restriction, whoever doth not renounce all that he hath cannot be my disciple. Every Christian must renounce therefore all that he possesses, even things the most innocent, since they would cease to be so if he did not renounce them.

He must therefore renounce even the things that he is obliged to preserve with great care, as the good of his family, or his own reputation, since he ought to cling with his heart to none of these things. He ought to keep them only for a sober and moderate use, and finally, he should be ready to lose them whenever Providence may choose to deprive him of them.

He ought even to renounce the persons he loves the most, and whom he is bound to love. And see, in what this renunciation consists. It is in loving them only for God ; in using soberly and for the needs of consolation their friendship ; in being ready to lose them, when God shall will it ; and never wishing to seek in them the true repose of the heart. This is that chastity of true christian friendship, which seeks only the sacred spouse in the mortal and terrestrial friend. In this state we use the creature, and the world as not abusing them, according to the words of St.

Paul ; we wish not to enjoy, we only use what God gives us and wills that we should love. But we use it with the moderation of a heart which uses it only for necessity, and reserves itself for a more worthy object. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ would have us leave father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends, and that he has come to bring the sword into the midst of families.

— God is jealous. If you cling from the depth of your heart to any creature, your heart is no longer worthy of him. He rejects it as a wife, who is divided between her husband and a stranger.

After having renounced all that is around us, and that is not ourselves, we must come to the last sacrifice, that is, of all which is in us, and ourselves.

✦ The renunciation of the body is terrible to most delicate and worldly persons. These weak persons know of nothing that is more themselves, so to speak, than their bodies, which they flatter and adorn with so much care. Often these same persons having become disabused with regard to the graces of the body, preserve a love for their bodily life ; which amounts to a shameful cowardice, and makes them shudder

at the name of death. I think that your natural courage raises you sufficiently above these fears. It seems to me I hear you say, I wish neither to flatter my body, nor hesitate to consent to its destruction, when God shall choose to turn it to dust. But, although the body is thus renounced, there remain great difficulties in renouncing one's mind. The more we despise this body of clay by a natural courage, the more are we tempted to esteem what we bear within, that can thus despise the body. We feel with regard to our mind, our wisdom, and our virtue, as a young worldly woman about her beauty. It fills us with complacency ; we are pleased with ourselves for being wise, moderate, preserved from the intoxication of others ; and thereby even we are intoxicated with the pleasure of not appearing intoxicated with prosperity ; we renounce by a moderation full of courage the enjoyment of all that the world has most flattering ; but we wish to enjoy this very moderation. Oh, how dangerous is this state ; how subtle is this poison ; oh, how much you would be wanting to God, if you gave yourself up to this refinement of self-love. You should renounce therefore all enjoyment, and all natural complacency

in your wisdom and your virtue. Observe that the purer are the gifts of God, the more jealous is he of them.

* * * *

Whoever regards a grace with complacency and a certain pleasure of appropriation, turns it into poison.

Never appropriate to yourself therefore, not only exterior things, as favor, or your talents, but not even interior gifts. Your good will is no less a gift of mercy than the being and the life that come from God. Live then as if on borrowed goods. All that is in you, and all that is yourself are only lent you. Make use of them according to the intention of the lender ; but never dispose of them as of a possession that is your own. It is in this spirit of disappropriation, and simple use of ourselves and of our minds, to follow the movements of God, who is the sole proprietor of his creature, that the solid renunciation of ourselves consists.

You will probably ask me what should be in detail the practice of this disappropriation, and this renunciation. But I answer you, that this sentiment is no sooner in the depth of the will, than God himself leads the soul, as by the

hand, so as to exercise it in this renunciation on all occasions of the day. It is not by painful reflections and continual strivings that we renounce self; it is only by abstaining from seeking, and wishing to possess ourselves in our own way, that we lose ourselves in God.

ON DETACHMENT FROM SELF.

WHEN I said, that whoever is not attached to self by the will, is truly detached, my object was to prevent or cure the scruples that some may feel with regard to reference to self. Souls faithful to renounce themselves, are often troubled by certain views of self-interest that they have in acting or speaking. They fear that they have not enough resisted a vain self-complacency, some motive of reputation, or enjoyment of some advantage, or some degree of self-seeking in the consolations of virtue. All this distresses a tender soul with fears, and it makes it matter of accusation against itself. In order to give confidence to such a soul, it is good to say to it,

that all good and ill are in the will. When this reference to self is involuntary, it does not prevent our being truly detached from self.

But when we are really detached from self, you will say, can we have involuntarily those views of our own interest that are matters of the will.

To this, I reply, that it is rare that a soul truly detached from self and attached to God, seeks itself still for its own interest with deliberate purpose. But it is necessary, in order to give it freedom, and hinder it from being continually upon thorns, to know once for all, that involuntary reflections upon our own interest do not render us disagreeable to God, any more than other temptations to which we do not give our consent. Besides, it should be understood, that persons who have sincere piety, but who are not entirely dead to worldly advantage, or friendship, are apt to yield a little to some self-seeking on all subjects. They do not give into it directly and openly; but they suffer themselves to be drawn away occasionally. They still cling to self in all these things; and an evident proof of this is, that, if these supports of nature are shaken, they are in trouble and distress. If any accident troubles the repose of

our life, threatens our reputation, or separates from us those whose friendship we prize, we feel a poignant grief, that shows how much life and sensibility our self-love still has.

We cling then to ourselves almost without perceiving it, and the occasions of loss only discover to us the true state of our heart. It is only as God tears them from us, or seems to do so, that we lose an unjust and hurtful property in them by the sacrifice that we make of them to him.

All that we call a moderate use does not give us such an assurance of our detachment, as we have by bearing it calmly when we are deprived of them. It is only the loss, and the loss that God himself causes, that effects a true renunciation.

In this state of sincere but still imperfect piety, there is a multitude of ways in which we seek ourselves. There is a time in which we do not yet see these distinctly, and when God permits the interior light to go no farther than the strength for sacrifice. Jesus Christ says within us what he said to his apostles; "I have many other things to make known to you; but you cannot bear them now."

We see in ourselves good intentions that are real; but we should be frightened if we could see to how many things we still cling. It is not with a full will, and knowingly, that we have these attachments. We do not say to ourselves, I have them and I choose to have them; but still we do have them, and sometimes even we fear we may search too deep and find them. We feel our weakness, and dare not penetrate farther. Sometimes also we would like to find all in order to sacrifice all. But it is an indiscreet and rash zeal, like that of Peter, who said I am ready to die, and yet a servant girl frightened him. We seek to discover all our weaknesses, and God tenderly spares us in this our seeking. He refuses to us a light too advanced for our condition. He does not permit us to see in our hearts what it is not yet time to eradicate from them. It is an admirable forbearance of the goodness of God, never to solicit us within to sacrifice to him any thing that we have hitherto loved and possessed, without imparting to us the necessary light for this purpose, or giving us the light of sacrifice without affording the necessary strength. Till then, it is with us with regard to this sacrifice, as with the Apos-

ties with regard to what Jesus Christ predicted to them of his death ; they understood nothing of it, and their eyes were closed to the light. The souls, the most upright and most watchful against their defects, are still in this state of obscurity, with regard to certain detachments that God reserves for a more advanced state of faith and death. We should not wish to anticipate the time for these, and it is sufficient to remain at peace, provided we are faithful in all that we know. If there remains any thing to know, God will discover it to us.

In the mean time God hides from us, with a veil of mercy, what we should not yet be able to bear. We have a certain impatient zeal for our own perfection, we would choose at once to see all and to sacrifice all. But an humble expectation under the hand of God and gently bearing with ourselves, without self flattery in this state of darkness and dependence, are infinitely more useful to us in dying to self, than all these uneasy efforts to advance our perfection. Let us then content ourselves with following, without looking farther, all the light that is given to us from one moment to another. It is the daily bread. God only gives it for each day.

It is the manna too ; he who wishes to take a double portion, and make provision for the morrow, commits a great mistake ; it will spoil in his hands, and he will eat no more than he who has taken his portion only for the day.

It is this dependence like that of a child upon its father, to which God wishes to mould us even in regard to our spiritual wants. He dispenses to us the interior light, as a wise mother would assign to her daughter her tasks. She would not give to her a new one, until the first were finished. Have you finished all that God has set before you ? Instantly then will he present to you a new work, for he never leaves the soul idle, and without progress in the work of detachment. If on the contrary you have not yet finished the first work, he hides from you what is to follow. A traveller who is passing over a vast and level country, sees nothing beyond a little height that bounds the horizon at a distance. When he has arrived at this height, he discovers at once a new extent of country as vast as the first. So in the path of self-denial and self-renunciation, we imagine that we discover all at the first glance ; we think that we reserve nothing, and cling neither

to self, nor any thing else. We would choose rather to die, than hesitate to make a universal sacrifice. But in this daily detail God shews us, without ceasing, new countries. We find in our hearts a thousand things we would have declared were not there. God shews them to us, only as he casts them out. It is like an abscess that breaks ; the moment when it breaks is the only one that fills us with disgust ; before, we had it within, without feeling it, and did not believe that we had it ; it nevertheless was there, and it breaks only because it was there. When it was concealed, we thought ourselves well and sound. The moment when it breaks is the salutary moment, though painful and disgusting. Every one bears at the bottom of his heart a mass of corruption, which would make us die with shame, if God shewed us all its poison and loathsomeness ; self-love would be exposed to an intolerable punishment. I speak not here of those who have their hearts gangrened by enormous vices. I speak of souls that appear upright and pure. We should see a foolish vanity that dares not discover itself, and remains through shame in the inmost recesses of the heart. We should see self-complacency,

the haughtiness of pride, delicate subtleties of self-love and a thousand other interior recesses, which are as real as inexplicable. We shall see them only as God begins to cast them out.

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Let us submit therefore to the work of God within, and content ourselves with being faithful to the light of the present moment. It brings with it all that is necessary to prepare us for the light of the moment which follows; and this succession of graces that are linked together like the rings of a chain, prepares us insensibly for the distant sacrifices of which we had not caught sight. That death to ourselves, and to all that we love, which is yet general and superficial in our will, after having pierced its surface, will send down its roots far into the depths of this will. It will penetrate even to the centre; it will leave nothing to the creature. It will thrust out, unsparingly, all that is not God.

Finally, be persuaded upon the word of another, until experience shall make you taste and feel it yourself, that this detachment from self, and from all that we love, very far from destroying good friendship, and hardening the heart, produces on

the contrary, in God, a friendship not only pure and solid, but cordial, faithful, affectionate, full of a sweet sympathy; and that there are found in it all the delights of friendship that nature itself seeks for its consolation.

ON SADNESS.

WITH regard to a certain sadness, which weighs down and depresses the heart, there are two rules that it appears to me important to observe. The first is to remedy it by the means that Providence furnishes us. For example, not to overburden ourselves with difficult affairs, that we may not sink under an excessive weight, to husband the strength not only of the body, but of the mind also, by not taking upon ourselves matters in which we should count too much on our own courage; to reserve for ourselves hours for prayer, for reading, the cheering influence of good conversation; and even have recourse to diversions in order to relax at the

same time, the mind with the body according to our need.

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The second rule is to bear peaceably all the involuntary impressions of sadness that we suffer from without, notwithstanding the helps and precautions that we have just mentioned.

Interior and unpremeditated discouragements help to advance us more quickly in the way of faith than all else, provided we are not stopped by them, and the voluntary weakness of the soul does not give it up to that melancholy that takes possession, as by force, of all within.

A step taken in this state is always a giant stride. It is worth a thousand in a more agreeable and happy state. We have then only to despise our discouragement, and still go on to render this state of weakness more useful and greater than that of courage and the most heroic strength. O how deceitful is that conscious courage which renders every thing easy, and which bears every thing, which is pleased with itself that it never hesitates! Oh, how it nourishes confidence in self, and a certain elevation of heart! This courage, that sometimes is wonderfully edifying to the pub-

lic, nourishes within a certain satisfaction, and a testimony to ourselves, which is a very subtle poison.

We have a consciousness of our own virtue, we wish to possess it; we have a feeling of satisfaction in our own strength.

A soul weakened and humbled, that finds no resource in itself, that fears, is troubled, sorrowful even unto death like Jesus in the garden; finally, which cries out like him on the cross, "Oh God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," is much more purified, more withdrawn from self, more annihilated and dead to all desires of its own, than those strong souls that enjoy in peace the fruits of their own virtue.

Happy the soul which God casts down, which God overwhelms, from which he takes all strength in itself, that it may find support in him alone; which sees its poverty, is content with it; which bears beside its outward crosses, the great interior cross of involuntary discouragement, without which all others would have no weight.

DISTRACTION OF MIND AND SADNESS.

1. You find difficulty on two points. The one is to avoid distraction of mind, the other to sustain yourself against melancholy. As for this distraction, you will not cure it by forced reflections. Do not hope to do the work of grace by the contrivances and efforts of nature. Content yourself with giving yourself without reserve to God, and never look upon any painful condition, that you would not accept in entire submission to his divine providence.

Never indeed go forward to meet these crucifying thoughts ; but when God permits them to come to you without your seeking, never let them pass without fruit.

Accept, in spite of the repugnances and shrinkings of nature, all that God presents to your mind, as a trial by which he might exercise your faith. Never distress yourself to know, if you would have the strength to execute when the occasion comes, what you desire to do at a distance ; the present occasion will have its graces, but the grace of the moment in which

you look upon these crosses, is to accept them cheerfully, at the time when God shall give them to you.

This foundation laid, go forward tranquilly and with confidence. Provided this disposition of your will be not changed by voluntary attachments to any thing contrary to the divine order, it will be permanent.

Your imagination will wander over a thousand vain objects ; it will even be more or less agitated, according to the places where you may be, and as it may have been disturbed by objects more or less exciting.

But what matter ? The imagination, as St. Theresa says, is the fool of the house ; it ceases not to make noise and confusion ; the mind too is drawn away by it ; it cannot help seeing the images that it presents. Its attention to the images is unavoidable ; and this attention is a real distraction ; but provided it is involuntary, it never separates from God. It is only the distraction of the will that does all the harm.

When you shall not perceive any distraction, it will never be a distraction of the heart. As soon as you perceive it, you will raise your eyes to God. The fidelity you shall have in

returning to his presence every time you perceive your state, will procure for you the grace of a more frequent presence ; and it is, if I do not deceive myself, the way to render soon this presence familiar.

This fidelity in turning away from other objects whenever we perceive the distraction, will not long be in a soul without the gift of a frequent and easy communion with God. But you must not imagine that you can enter into this state by your own efforts. This striving would render you constrained, scrupulous, uneasy in the business and conversation in which you need to be free. You would always be in fear that the presence of God would escape you ; always running to recover it. You would envelop yourself in the phantoms of your own imagination. Thus the presence of God, which ought by its sweetness and enlightening influence to facilitate your application to all the other objects that we need to consider in the order of God, would render you on the contrary always agitated, and almost incapable of the exterior duties of your condition. Never be distressed therefore that this sensible presence of God has escaped from you ; but especially do not desire

a sense of the presence of God founded on reasonings, and sustained by too many reflections.

Content yourself in the course of the day and in the detail of your occupations, with a general and interior view of God ; so that if at that time you should be asked what is the disposition of your heart, it should be true to say that it tends to God, although you might at the time be attending to some other object.

Do not distress yourself about the wanderings of your imagination that you cannot restrain. Persons are often distracted by fear of distraction, and then by regret for having experienced it. What would you say of a man who on a journey instead of going forward always without stopping, should pass his time in anticipating the falls he might meet with, and when one happens should turn back to view the place where he fell ?

Go on, go constantly forward, you would say to him, go on, without looking behind you, and without stopping. "Walk" says the apostle, "so as to abound more and more." The abundance of the love of God will serve for your correction, more than your anxiety and eager

reflections upon yourself. This rule is simple ; but nature accustomed to do every thing by feeling and reflection, finds it simple in the extreme. We would choose to help ourselves and give ourselves more activity. But it is in this respect that the rule is a good one, that it keeps us in a state of pure faith, in which we lean only on God, to whom we abandon ourselves, and in which we die to ourselves by suppressing all that belongs to self.

In this way exterior observances are not multiplied, which might be a constraint upon persons much occupied, or might injure the health ; these are all changed to loving, but loving simply ; then nothing is done but what love directs us to do ; thus we are never over-burdened ; for we bear only what we love. This rule well adopted is thus sufficient to cure sadness.

2. Often sadness arises from this cause ; that seeking God we are not sensible enough of his presence to satisfy ourselves. To wish to have this sense of his presence is not to wish to possess him ; but it is wishing to be assured from love of ourselves, for our own solace, that we possess him. Nature cast down and discouraged, is impatient to escape out of the state of pure

faith in which every support fails it. It is as if in the air, and wishes to feel its advancement. At the sight of its faults, pride is vexed, and this vexation of pride is taken for a sentiment of penitence. We wish through self-love to have the pleasure of seeing ourselves perfect; we rail at ourselves that we are not so; we are impatient, haughty, and ill-humored toward ourselves and others. Deplorable error! as if the work of God could be accomplished by our moroseness; as if we could be united to the God of peace by losing interior peace! Martha! Martha! why art thou troubled about so many things for the service of Jesus Christ? One thing only is necessary, which is to love him, and sit attentive at his feet! When we are entirely given up to God, every thing is done without doing any thing useless; we suffer ourselves to be conducted with confidence. For the future we wish without reserve all that God wills; we shut our eyes that we may see nothing superfluous; and in the mean time we apply ourselves to accomplish his will in the present.

Sufficient for each day is its good and ill. This daily fulfilment of the will of God is the coming of his kingdom within us, and at the

same time our daily bread. We should think ourselves unbelieving and guilty of a pagan distrust, if we wished to penetrate into that future which God hides from us. We leave it to him ; it is for him to make it sweet or bitter, short or long. Let him do what seems good in his eyes.

The most perfect preparation for this future, whatever it may be, is to die to all our own wills, to give ourselves wholly to the will of God.

As the manna had all tastes, this general disposition contains all the graces, and all the sentiments suitable to all the conditions in which God can place us in time to come.

3. When we are thus ready for all, it is in this depth of the abyss that we begin to gain foothold. We are also as tranquil about the past as the future.

We suppose the worst of ourselves possible, but we cast ourselves blindly into the arms of God. We forget, we lose ourselves ; this forgetfulness of self is the most perfect penitence, for all conversion consists only in renouncing self to occupy ourselves with God. This forgetfulness of self is the martyrdom of self-love. We would like a hundred times better to con-

tradict, to condemn ourselves, to torture body and mind, than to forget ourselves.

This forgetfulness is an annihilation of self-love, in which it finds no resource. Then the heart is enlarged. We are relieved by being disburdened of the whole weight of self, with which we were overwhelmed. We are astonished to see how strait and simple the way is. We thought that there was need of a perpetual strife, and ever some new action.

We perceive on the contrary that there is little to do ; that it is sufficient without reasoning about the future or the past to look upon God with confidence as a good father, who leads us in the present moment as by the hand.

If any distraction makes us lose sight of him, without dwelling upon the distraction, we turn back to him from whom we had turned away. If we commit faults our penitence for them is all from love ; we return to God, and he produces in us the feelings he would have.

The sin appears hideous, but the humiliation which arises from it, and for which God has permitted it, appears good. As the reflections of pride upon our own faults are bitter, uneasy, and peevish, so the return of the soul to God

after its faults, is collected, peaceable, and sustained by confidence.

You will feel by experience how much this simple and peaceable return will facilitate your correction, more than all your vexation about the faults that have dominion over you. Only be faithful to turn simply toward God alone, as soon as you perceive your fault. It will be vain for you to wrangle with yourself; it is not with yourself that you ought to take measures. When you rail at yourself about your miseries, I only see in your counsel you alone with yourself. Poor counsel, where God is not!

Who shall stretch out a hand to help you out of the mire? Yourself? Alas! it is yourself who are sunk in it, and cannot get out! And besides this slough is yourself. The whole essence of your misery is the not being able to get away from self, and do you hope for the deliverance by being occupied always with yourself, and nourishing your sensibility by the sight of your weakness? By these reflections you are only moved to a sort of pity for yourself. But the slightest look toward God would calm your heart, troubled by this attention to self. His presence always effects the deliverance from self, and this

is what we need. Escape then from yourself, and you will be at peace. But how escape thus? We have only to turn gently towards God, and form by degrees the habit of this by fidelity, in returning to it whenever we perceive any distraction.

As for the natural sadness that arises from melancholy, it proceeds only from the body, and so diet and medicines will diminish that.

It is true it continually returns, but it is not voluntary. When God gives it we endure it in peace, like a fever and other bodily sufferings. The imagination is wrapt in a profound blackness; it is all hung with mourning; but the will which is nourished only on pure faith is very ready to experience all these impressions. Thus we are at peace, because we are at the same time at peace with ourselves and submissive to God.

The matter is not what we feel but what we will. We wish all that we have, and wish nothing that we have not. We would not choose to deliver ourselves from what we suffer, because it belongs to God alone to distribute crosses or consolations. We are in joy in the

midst of tribulations, as the Apostle says ; it is not a joy of the senses ; it is a joy of pure will.

The ungodly, in the midst of their pleasures have their will constrained, because they are never satisfied with their condition. They would like to drive away certain disgusts, and also enjoy certain delights that they lack. On the contrary the faithful soul has a will constrained in nothing, it accepts freely whatever God allots that is painful. It wishes it, it loves it, it embraces it, it would not choose to quit it, even should it cost only a single desire which should be its own, and contrary to its surrender to Providence, whose purposes it would in nothing anticipate. If any thing is capable of giving to the heart ease and freedom, it is this entire surrender. It sheds abroad in the heart "a peace more abundant than the rivers, and a righteousness like the depths of the sea." If any thing can render a mind serene, dissipate its scruples and its dark fears, soften its pains by the anointing of love, give to it a certain vigor in all its actions, and shed the joy of the Holy Spirit even on the countenance, and the words, it is this simple, free and childlike conduct in the arms of God.

But we reason too much, and hurt ourselves

by our reasonings. There is a temptation of reasoning that is to be feared like all other temptations. There is an attention to ourselves, sensitive, anxious, and distrustful, that is a temptation the more subtle, as we do not regard it as a temptation ; but on the contrary give ourselves to it more and more, because we take it for the vigilance commanded in the Gospel.

The watchfulness that Jesus Christ commands is a faithful attention to loving always, and doing the will of God in the present moment according to the intimations we have of it ; but it does not consist in distressing ourselves, putting ourselves always to the torture, and being constantly occupied with ourselves, rather than raising our eyes to God from whom comes our only help against ourselves. Why, under pretext of watchfulness, persist in discovering in ourselves what God does not will that we should see during this life ? Why lose thereby the fruit of pure faith and interior peace ? Why turn away from the presence of God, which he would render unceasing to us ? He has not said, be always yourselves the object before which you walk ; but “ Walk before me and you shall be *perfect*.”

David full of his spirit says, "I saw the Lord always before me," and again "mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net." The danger is at his feet ; yet his eyes are on high. It is less useful to consider our danger, than the help of God. Moreover, we see all brought together in God. We there see human misery and the divine goodness ; a single glance of an upright and pure soul, however simple it may be, perceives all in this infinite light.

But, on the contrary, what can we see in our own darkness except only our darkness itself? Oh, my God, provided I do not cease to see thee, I shall not cease to see myself in all my miseries ; and I shall see myself better in thee than in myself. The true watchfulness is to see in thee thy will so as to fulfil it, and not to reason, without end, on the state of my own.

When exterior occupations shall prevent my seeing nought but thee by closing in prayer the avenues of the senses, at least at such times, Oh, Lord, I will see thee doing all in all.

I will everywhere behold, with joy, thy will fulfilled within me and without ; like the saints in bliss, I will continually say amen. I will

always sing in my heart the song of the heavenly Zion. I will bless thee even in the wicked who by their evil will fail not to accomplish, in spite of themselves, thy all holy, just and omnipotent will. In the chaste liberty of spirit which thou givest thy children, I will act and speak simply, cheerfully, and with confidence. Even if I shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, because thou art always with me. I will never seek any danger, I will never enter into any engagement, but with the indications of thy Providence to be my strength and my solace. Even in those occupations in which I shall be sustained by thy calling, I will give to recollection, to prayer, and to retirement, every day, every hour, every moment, thou shalt leave me free; and I will quit this blessed state, only as far as thou shalt thyself call me to some exterior duty. Then I shall in appearance go forth from thee, but thou wilt go forth with me, and while I thus seem to leave thee thou wilt carry me in thy bosom. I will not seek myself in my intercourse with the creatures. I will not fear that the state of devotion may lessen my agreeableness with them, or render my conversation insipid — for I wish

to please men only so far as that is necessary in order to please thee.

If thou wishest to make use of me to accomplish thy purposes with regard to them, I yield myself to thee; without reflection upon myself, I will simply impart to them all those gifts thou hast showered upon me. I will not go groping along, always falling back upon myself. However perilous or distracting the duty may be, I will conduct myself before thee with an upright intention, knowing that it is the goodness of a Father in whose presence I walk, and that he does not desire subtlety in his children.

If, on the contrary, thou dost not wish to make use of me for others, I will not offer myself, I will perform in peace the other things to which thou shalt limit me. For according to that disposition of self-surrender which thou dost grant me, I neither desire nor refuse any thing. I am ready for any service and consent to be useless to all. Courted or despised, known or unknown, applauded or opposed, what is it to me? It is thee and not myself, thee, and not thy gifts distinct from thyself and thy love, that I seek. All conditions are indifferent to me, provided I be in that which thou willest for me.

ON CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

To receive equally, and with the same submission, all the different things that God gives us during the day, both without and within, is what is best for us to do.

Without, there are disagreeable things, that we must bear courageously, and agreeable things on which we must not allow our hearts to rest. We resist the temptation of what is disagreeable by accepting it, and of what is flattering by refusing to open our hearts to it. For those things that are internal we have only to do the same. Those which are bitter, serve to crucify and produce their full effect in the soul, if we receive them simply with an unlimited acceptance, and without seeking to soften them. Those which are pleasant, and which are given us to sustain our weakness by a sensible solace in exterior exercises, should also be accepted, but in another way. We must receive them, since it is God who gives them to us for our need, but we must receive them not from love of them, but through conformity to the will of God. We should use

them at the moment as we make use of a remedy, without complacency, without attachment, without appropriating them. These gifts should be received in us, but they should not gain a hold upon us, so that when God shall withdraw them, the loss may never trouble or discourage us. The source of presumption is in attachment to these transient and sensible gifts. We imagining that we count only upon the gift of God, but we count also upon ourselves because we appropriate to ourselves the gift of God, and confound it with ourselves. The evil of this conduct is, that, whenever we find we have miscalculated upon ourselves, we fall into discouragement. But a soul that leans only on God is not surprised at its own misery. It takes pleasure in seeing that itself can do nothing, and that God alone can do all. I care little that I see myself poor, knowing that my father possesses infinite riches that he wishes to give me. It is only by nourishing our heart or pure confidence in God, that we become accustomed to dispense with confidence in ourselves.

It is for this reason that we should count less upon a sensible fervor, and upon certain measures of wisdom, that we take with ourselves

from our own perfection, than upon a simplicity, a littleness, a renunciation of all movements of our own, and a perfect pliancy in giving ourselves up to all the impressions of grace. All the rest, by establishing shining virtues, would only inspire us secretly with more confidence in our own efforts. Let us pray God, that he will tear from our heart all that we should choose to plant there ourselves, and that he will plant there with his own hands the tree of life laden with fruits.

IN WHAT MANNER WE SHOULD WATCH OVER OURSELVES.

THE following appears to me the method we should practice in watching over ourselves without being too much occupied with it.

The wise and vigilant traveller watches over all his steps, and has always his eyes open on the part of the road immediately before him ; but he is not constantly turning back to count his steps, and examine all his tracks ; he would thus

lose time in which he should be going forward. A soul that God truly leads by the hand, (for I speak not of those who are still learning to walk, and who are still seeking the way,) should watch over his path, but with a vigilance single, tranquil, limited to the present, and without anxiety from the love of self. It is a continual attention to the will of God, to accomplish it at each moment, and not a reflection upon ourselves to be assured of our condition, while God wishes us to be uncertain of it. For this reason the Psalmist says, "my eyes are raised toward the Lord, and he will deliver my feet from the snares."

Observe, that in order to guide his feet with safety among ways beset with snares, instead of casting down his eyes to examine all his steps, he, on the contrary, raises them toward the Lord. For we never watch over ourselves so well, as when we walk with God present to our eyes, as God ordered Abraham; and indeed what should be the end of all our vigilance? to follow step by step the will of God. Who conforms to that in every thing, watches over himself, and sanctifies himself in every thing.

If then we never lost the presence of God, we should never cease to watch over ourselves,

put with a vigilance simple, loving, tranquil, and disinterested ; whereas that other vigilance, that some desire for the sake of security, is harsh, anxious, and full of self-interest. It is not by our own light, but by that of God that we should walk. We cannot see the holiness of God, without abhorrence of our slightest unfaithfulness. We do not fail indeed to add to the presence of God and meditation, the examinations of conscience, according to our need of them, and in order to facilitate the confessions we have to make. These examinations are made more and more, in a manner simple, easy, and removed from all anxious reference to self. We examine ourselves not for our own interest, but to conform to the advice given us, and accomplish the will of God.

As for the rest, we give ourselves up into his hands, and we are as glad in knowing that we are in the hands of God, as we should be sorry to be in our own. We desire to see nothing that he is pleased to hide. As we love him infinitely more than we love ourselves, we sacrifice ourselves unconditionally to his good pleasure, we think only of loving him, and forgetting ourselves. He who thus generously loses his soul, will find it again for life eternal.

ON CROSSES.

THE painful things that come between God and us, are crosses which we should endure patiently, and which will be the means of uniting us to him, if we bear them with humility. The things which confound and overwhelm our pride, are still better for us than those which animate us to virtue. We need to be cast down, as St. Paul was at the gates of Damascus, and find no resource in ourselves, but in God.

Nature inspires only a proud and disdainful courage, and is irritated against the persons whom God makes use of to humble us.

We should bear our crosses in silence with an humble, and peaceful courage. We should be great in God and not in ourselves; great by gentleness and patience, and little by humility.

If God, in the humiliations he brings upon us, wounds to the quick, so much the better; it is the charitable physician applying the remedy to our diseases which he would cure. Let us be silent, let us adore him who strikes us, let us open our mouths only to say, "I have deserved

it." However bitter the cup, we should swallow it to the dregs like Jesus Christ. He died for those who killed him, and he has taught us to love, to bless, and to pray for those who make us suffer.

We should redouble our prayers in the time of trouble and temptations. We shall find in the heart of Jesus, dying on the cross, all that our own hearts need in order to love those that our pride would choose to hate.

The cross when loved is but half a cross, because love softens all; and we suffer much only because our love is small. Oh, how happy are we in suffering much, and how unhappy in not suffering with Jesus; since we are in this world only to be purified by suffering.

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Crosses are the daily bread. Our soul has every day need of a certain measure of sufferings in order to become detached, as the body has need of a certain quantity of food. We need crosses. We should make no progress if God did not take care to turn the world and life into bitterness to us, in order to detach us from them.

The cross is never without fruit, when we receive it in the spirit of sacrifice. We should

accept it, adoring the hand of God which lays it upon us to sanctify us. Happy he who is ready for all ; who never says it is too much ; who counts not upon himself, but on the all-powerful ; who wishes no consolation, except so far as God himself wishes to grant it, and who nourishes himself on his pure will.

There are in crosses so many tokens of mercy and so great a harvest of graces for faithful souls, that if nature is afflicted by them, faith should rejoice in them. We find in them peace by submission, and by the unreserved sacrifice of the purest pleasures. For to this point God urges the soul to detach it from all that is not himself. What remains to be done, but to embrace the cross that he presents and suffer ourselves to be crucified ? When he has thoroughly crucified, he consoles ; but not like the creatures who give poisoned consolations, to nourish the venom of self-love ; he consoles only in a solid and true way.

The peace that is found in submission without any exterior alleviation is a great gift. Thereby God accustoms us to be tried without being cast down. Although weak and sensitive nature sinks, in the depth of our souls we are

supported. It is a peace the purer in proportion to its calmness.

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The crosses that are chosen by ourselves are almost nothing ; God alone knows how to crucify.

The crosses that God gives us, and under which he would bow us down, will not repress our haughtiness ; it will be only by renouncing our own spirit in silence before God, that we can be humbled and softened by his grace.

The crosses which we anticipate by an anxious foresight, are seen beyond the order of God. We see them without unction to support them ; we see them even by an unfaithfulness which drives the influences of grace away from us. Thus all is bitter and insupportable in them, all dark and without resource. And the soul which has wished to taste, through curiosity, the forbidden fruit, finds only death and revolt without consolation within itself.

Behold thus, what it is not to trust in God, and to dare to violate his secrets of which he is jealous ! Let us shut our eyes then to all that God hides from us, and holds in reserve in the treasures of his deep counsels. Let us adore without seeing ; let us be silent ; let us remain in peace. The crosses of the present moment

always bring their grace, and consequently their mitigation with them. It is the hand of God which makes itself felt in them.

Let us go out of ourselves ; let us no longer love ourselves with an inordinate love ; and the love of God which will at every moment unfold itself in every thing, will console us also each moment for all that God shall do around or within us. The contradictions of men, their inconstancy, even their injustice, will appear to us the effects of the unchangeable wisdom, justice and goodness of God. We shall see only God, the infinitely good, hiding himself under the weaknesses of blind and corrupt men. Thus this deceitful fashion of the world, passing like the pageant of a theatre, will become to us a spectacle very real, and worthy of eternal praises, when seen in its relation to God.

What do we expect of men ? They are weak, inconstant, blind ; some do not will what they have the power to do, others have not the power to perform what they will. Nature is a broken reed ; if we wish to lean upon it, the reed bends, cannot support us, and pierces our hand. However great men may appear, they are nothing in themselves ; but when God

is great in them, it is he who makes capricious humor, peevish pride, dissimulation, vanity and all foolish passions serve his eternal counsels with regard to the chosen. He employs inward and outward means, the corruption of men, our own imperfections, and our own sensibility. In a word, he moves heaven and earth to save what is dear to him ; nothing is done but to purify us, and make us worthy of himself. Let us rejoice then, when our heavenly Father tries us here below by divers interior and exterior temptations, when he renders all without us contrary, and all within painful. Let us rejoice, for it is thus that our faith, more precious than gold, is purified. Let us rejoice to experience thus the nothingness and falsehood of all that is not God ; for it is by this crucifying experience that we are torn from ourselves and the desires of this world. Let us rejoice, for it is by these throes that the new man is born in us. What ! let us not be discouraged, it is the hand of God who hastens to accomplish his work. It is what we every day wish him to do ; and as soon as he begins to do it we are troubled. Our cowardice and impatience arrest the hand of God.

A piety without crosses is but an imaginary piety. While we remain shut up within ourselves, we are exposed to the contradiction of men, their malignity, their injustice ; our own ill humor exposes us to that of others ; our passions clash with those of our neighbors ; our desires are so many places by which we lay ourselves open to all other men ; our pride, which is incompatible with that of our neighbor, swells like the waves of the agitated sea ; every thing opposes, repulses, attacks us ; we are laid open on all sides by the sensitiveness of our passions, and the jealousy of our pride. There is no peace to be hoped in ourselves, where we live at the mercy of a crowd of eager and insatiable desires, and where we can never satisfy that self of the old man so jealous, so delicate, so sensitive about all that touches it.

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The only remedy by which we may find peace is to go out of ourselves. We must renounce self, and lose all our self-love, that we may have nothing more either to lose, to fear, or to spare. Then we taste the true peace reserved for the men of good will, that is to say those who have no other will than that of God,

which becomes theirs. Then men have no more power over us, for we are no longer accessible through our desires or our fears; then we wish for all that God wills, and wish for nothing that he does not will. This is being inaccessible to the enemy; it is being invulnerable. Man can do only what God gives him power to do against us. All that God permits him to do against us being the will of God is also ours. In this state we have placed our treasure so high that no hand can reach it, to snatch it from us. Our reputation may be assailed, but we consent to it, for we know how good humiliation is when it comes from God. We are disappointed in friendships; so much the better; it is the only true friend who is jealous of all others; and who detaches us from them, in order to purify our attachments. We are subjected to vexations, servitude, constraint, but God knows it, and it is enough. We love the hand that crushes us. Peace is found in the midst of all these troubles. Blessed peace! which follows us even to the cross! We wish what we have, and wish for nothing that we have not. The more perfect this self-surrender, the deeper the peace. If any bonds or any desires remain, the peace

is imperfect. If all the bonds were broken, the liberty would be unbounded. Let disgrace, grief and death fall upon me ; I listen to Jesus Christ who says to me ; “ fear not those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.” Oh, how weak are they even when they take away life ! How short is their power ! they can only break an earthen vessel, only kill that which of itself is dying every day, only hasten a little that death which is a deliverance ; after which we escape from their hands to the bosom of God, where all is tranquil and unchangeable.

Of the persons who cause us suffering, we should think only to pardon them. We should see in them God who makes use of them to exercise our humility, our patience, our love for the cross. We shall one day see before God, how useful the persons who crucify us have been to us, by fastening us to the cross with Jesus Christ. The suffering they cause will soon pass, and the fruit that will result will be eternal.

NECESSITY OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE
SOUL, IN RESPECT TO THE GIFTS OF GOD,
AND ESPECIALLY FRIENDSHIPS.

GOD who appears so rigorous to the soul never brings any suffering upon us for the pleasure of making us suffer. The rigor of the operation arises from the evil that it is necessary to remove. He would make no incision if all was sound. He cuts off only what is dead and ulcerated. It is then our corrupt self-love that causes our pains ; the hand of God causes the least that is possible. Judge then how deep and envenomed are the wounds, since God spares us so much, and yet makes us suffer so violently.

In like manner, too, as he never makes us suffer but for our healing, so he never takes from us any of his gifts, but to restore them to us a hundred fold. From love he deprives us of all the purest gifts that we possess impurely. The purer the gifts, the more jealous is he, that we may keep them without appropriating them, or ever referring them to ourselves. The most eminent graces are the most dangerous poisons,

if we find in them any support and any complacency of self-love.

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Hence it is that all perceived virtues need to be purified, because they nourish the natural life in us. Corrupt nature makes a very subtle nourishment for itself of the gifts of grace most contrary to nature. Self-love nourishes itself not only on fervent prayer and self-renunciation, but also on the purest devotion and the most extreme sacrifices. It is an infinite support to think that we are no longer supported by anything, and that we do not cease in this horrible trial, to give ourselves up faithfully and without reserve. To consummate within us the purifying sacrifice of the gifts of God, it is necessary completely to destroy the holocaust; it is necessary to lose sight of every thing, even the perceived surrender to the will of God, without however losing it in reality.

It is only in this apparent loss of all his gifts, and the real sacrifice of the whole self, after having lost the feeling of all interior resource, that God alone is found purely. The infinite jealousy of God exacts so much of us, and our self-love compels him (if we may so speak) to this, because we never wholly lose

ourselves in God, until all other supports fail us. It is like a man falling into an abyss ; he does not completely give himself up, until after all supports of the bank escape from his hands. The self-love that God casts down, seizes in its despair at every shadow of grace, as a drowning man catches at all the twigs he finds as he falls.

We should, therefore, understand the necessity of that withdrawing of the feeling or consciousness of all the divine gifts, which is gradually effected in us. There is not a single gift, however eminent it may be, which, after having been a means of advancement, may not sometimes become subsequently a snare, or an obstacle, through reflections by which the gift is appropriated to self, and which soil the purity of the soul. Hence it is that God takes away what he had given.

But he does not take it away to deprive the soul of it forever. He takes it away to make it a better gift to us, and to restore it without the impurity of that evil appropriation of it, that we make without perceiving it. The loss of the gift serves to take away the feeling of ownership ;

and this feeling taken away, the gift is restored a hundred fold.

Then the gift is no longer, if I may venture so to speak, a gift of God to the soul, but God himself. It is no longer a gift of God ; for it is no longer regarded as something distinguished from him, and which the soul can possess ; it is God himself alone and immediately that we regard, and who, without being possessed by the soul, possesses it according to his good pleasure.

The method then that God usually takes with the soul is to draw it first to himself, in order to detach it from the world and gross passions, by making it taste all the most fervent virtues, and the sweetness of devotion. In this first sensible attraction, the whole soul is turned to mortification and prayer. It denies itself without ceasing in everything ; it disengages itself constantly from all exterior consolations ; those of friendship even are retrenched, because it feels in them that impurity of self-love which refers friends to self. There remain only the friends to whom we are bound by conformity of sentiments, or those cultivated from charity or duty ; all the rest become burdensome ; and if we have not lost the natural relish for them,

we distrust still more their friendship when they are not in the same state of devotion with ourselves.

There are many souls that never pass beyond this state of fervor and spiritual abundance. But there are others whom God leads farther, and whom he strips through jealousy, after having clothed and adorned them. These fall into a state of disgust, spiritual coldness, and languor, in which every thing is burdensome to them. Far from being alive to the enjoyments of friendship, the friendship of persons in whom they formerly delighted the most, becomes irksome to them. A soul in this state feels that God and all his gifts are withdrawn from it. This is for it a state of agony, and a kind of despair; the person can no longer endure himself; all is turned to disgust. God takes away every thing, and the delight in friendship with all the rest. Can we wonder at this? He almost takes away all relish for his love and his law. The person knows not where he is; the heart is withered; its life is almost gone; he can love nothing. The bitterness of having lost God, of whom in his fervor he had had so sweet a perception, is like wormwood poured over all that

he had loved among the creatures. He is like a sick man who feels himself sinking, for want of nourishment, and who at the same time has an abhorrence of the most exquisite food.

Then speak not of friendship ; the very name is distressing, and would bring tears to the eyes ; everything overmasters you ; you know not what you wish. You have likings and pains like a child, of which you cannot give account, and which vanish like a dream the moment you speak of them. What you say of your disposition appears to you always a falsehood, because it ceases to be true as soon as you begin to speak of it. Nothing is permanent in you ; you can give no assurance of any thing — you can promise yourself nothing — cannot even describe yourself. You are, with regard to your interior sentiments, like the daughters of the Visitation with regard to their cells, and their furniture ; every thing changes — nothing is your own — your heart less than all the rest. It is incredible how much this puerile inconstancy humbles and breaks down a wise soul, firm and haughty in its virtue. To speak then of a good disposition, of tenderness, generosity, constancy, gratitude for one's friends to a soul

sick, and in the agonies of death, is like speaking of dancing and music to a dying man. The heart is a tree withered to its very roots.

But wait till the winter is past, and God has brought death upon all that should die ; then the spring reanimates all, and God restores friendship with all other gifts a hundred fold. We feel our own inclinations for our true friends revive within us ; we no longer love them in ourselves and for self ; we love them in God and for God, but with a love lively, tender, accompanied with delight and sensibility ; for God can render sensibility pure. It is not sensibility, but self-love that corrupts our friendships. Then we give ourselves up without scruple to this chaste friendship, for it is God who inspires it. We love through him, without being turned away from him ; it is him that we love in what we should love.

In that order of providence that connects us with certain persons, God gives us delight in them ; and we do not fear to wish to be loved by these persons, because he who inspires the desire, inspires it very purely, and without any selfish feeling of ownership. We wish to be loved, as we should like that another should be,

if it were according to the purpose of God. We seek ourselves in them for the sake of God, without self-complacency, and without any interest of our own. In this resurrection of friendship, as all is without interest, and without selfish reflections, we see all the defects of our friend and our friendship without being offended.

Before God has thus purified friendship, the most pious persons are sensitive, jealous, irritable toward their best friends, because self-love always fears to lose, and always wishes to gain even in the intercourse that appears the most generous and disinterested. If it seek neither profit nor honor in the friend, at least it seeks in him the agreeableness of the intercourse, the solace of confidence, the repose of heart which is the greatest charm of life ; finally, the exquisite pleasure of loving generously and disinterestedly. Take away this consolation, trouble this friendship which seems so pure, and self-love is disconsolate, it complains, it wishes to be compassionated ; it is vexed ; it is transported with grief ; it is for ourselves that we are grieved, which shows that it was self that was loved in the friend. But when it is God whom we love in our friend, we are bound to him by a close and

unreserved union ; and yet if the friendship is broken by the order of God, all is peaceable in the depths of the soul ; it has lost nothing ; for it has nothing to lose since it has lost itself. If it feels grief it is for the person that it loved, in case this rupture is hurtful to him. The grief may be deep and bitter, since the friendship was deeply felt ; but it is a peaceful grief, and exempt from the cutting pangs of an interested love.

There is yet a second difference to be observed in this change of friendships by grace. While we yet belong to self, we love nothing except for ourselves ; and the man shut up in himself can have only a limited friendship according to his measure. It is always a heart straitened in all its affections ; and the greatest worldly generosity has always somewhere narrow limits. If the glory of loving nobly leads far, we shall stop short as soon as we arrive where we can imagine that this glory will be injured. But for the souls which go out of themselves, and truly lose themselves in God, friendship is as boundless as he in whom they love. It is only the reference to self that narrows the heart ; for God has given to it something infinite which

has affinity to him. For this reason the soul that is not occupied with itself, which in every thing counts itself as nothing, finds in this nothing the immensity of God himself. It loves without measure, without end, without human motives ; it loves because God, boundless love, loves as God.

This is the state of the apostle, which is so well expressed by St. Paul. He feels every thing with an infinite purity and quickness ; he bears in his heart all the churches ; the whole universe is too narrow for this heart ; he rejoices ; he is afflicted ; he is angry ; he is moved with tenderness ; his heart is as if the seat of all the strongest passions. He humbles himself ; he magnifies himself ; he has the authority of a father, and the tenderness of a mother ; he loves with a jealous love ; he wishes to be anathema for his children. All these sentiments, although free and voluntary, are inspired in him ; and it is thus that God makes his children love when they love only in him.

ON THE OPERATIONS OF GOD WITHIN THE
SOUL, TO LEAD MAN TO THE TRUE END -
FOR WHICH HE WAS CREATED.

AT first God attacked us outwardly ; he tore from us by degrees all the creatures that we loved too much, and contrary to his law. But this outward process, although essential in order to lay the foundation of the whole edifice, forms but a small part of it. Oh, how incomparably greater, more difficult, and more wonderful is the work within, although invisible !

There comes a time when God, after having thoroughly stripped and mortified us outwardly with respect to the creatures to which we were attached, attacks us within to tear us from ourselves. It is then no longer foreign objects that he takes from us ; he tears from us that self, that was the centre of our self-love. We loved all the rest only for this self, and it is this self that God pursues unrelentingly and unsparingly. To take from a man his clothes is to treat him ill ; but it is nothing in comparison with the rigor that would tear off his skin, and leave no flesh

on his bones. — Cut off the branches of a tree, and, far from killing it, you give strength to the sap, it puts forth anew on all sides ; but attack the trunk, dry up the root, it loses its leaves, it languishes, it dies. It is thus that God takes pleasure in making us die to ourselves.

As for the exterior mortification of the senses, he enables us to effect this by certain efforts of courage against ourselves. The more the senses are deadened by this courage of the soul, the more the soul sees its virtue, and sustains itself by its exertion. But subsequently God reserves to himself to attack the depths of this soul, and deprive it of the very last breath of all its own life ! Then it is no longer by the strength of the soul that he combats exterior objects ; it is by the weakness of the soul that he turns it against itself. It sees itself, and is filled with abhorrence at what it sees. It remains faithful, but it no longer sees its fidelity. All the faults that it has hitherto had, rise up against it, and often new ones appear which it has never suspected. It no longer finds that resource of fervor and courage that formerly sustained it. It faints, and is like Jesus Christ sorrowful even unto death, and all that remains to it is the will

to cling to nothing, and abandon itself without reserve to the operation of the divine will.

Still more, it has not even the consolation of perceiving in itself this will. It is no longer a perceived and conscious will, but simple, without reference to self, and so much the more concealed, as it is more inward and deeper in the soul. In this state, God takes care of what is necessary in order to detach this person from self. He strips him by degrees by taking from him, one after another, all the garments with which he was clothed.

The last sacrifices, though not always the greatest, are nevertheless the most severe. Though the robe is in itself more precious than the under garment, we feel the loss of the latter much more than the former. In the first sacrifices we are consoled for what is lost by what remains; in the last there remains nothing but bitterness, nakedness, and confusion.

You will ask, perhaps, in what these sacrifices consist; but I cannot tell. They are as various as the characters of men. Each suffers his own, according to his need, and the designs of God. How can we see of what one shall be stripped, if we know not with what he is

clothed? Every one clings to a multitude of things he would never imagine. He only feels his attachment to them when they are taken from him. I feel my hair only when it is torn from my head. God develops to us by degrees the depths of the heart that were unknown to us, and we are astonished to discover, even in our virtues, faults of which we had always thought ourselves incapable. It is like a grotto that appeared dry on all sides, and from which water suddenly trickles in places where we least expected it.

These sacrifices that God requires of us are not usually such as we might imagine. What is expected finds us prepared, and is little suited to effect within us the death to ourselves. God surprises us by things the most unexpected. They are nothings, but nothings that fill us with distress, and are the torture of self-love. Great and shining virtues are no longer in season; they would contain pride; they would give a certain inward strength and confidence, contrary to the design of God, which is to deprive us of our foothold. Then the conduct is simple, and has nothing out of the usual course. Every thing is common. Others see

nothing great, and the person himself finds nothing in himself but what is natural, feeble, spiritless ; but one would like a hundred times better to fast on bread and water, and practise the greatest austerities, than suffer all that goes on within. Not that the person relishes austerities with fervor ; no ; this fervor has gone ; but there is found in the pliancy that God demands for an endless number of little things, more of renunciation and death to self than there would be in the greatest sacrifices. In the mean time, God gives no rest to the soul until he has rendered it pliant and yielding, by bending it in every direction. Now we are required to speak too ingenuously ; then again to be silent. We are obliged to be praised, then blamed, then forgotten, then examined anew. We must be low, — be exalted, suffer ourselves to be condemned without saying a word when that might justify us at once ; at another time we are required to speak well of ourselves. We must consent to find ourselves weak, disquieted, irresolute about a trifle ; to show the pettishness of a little child ; to offend our friends by our coldness ; to become jealous and suspicious without any reason ; to utter the most foolish jealousies to those against

whom they are felt ; to speak with patience and ingenuousness to some persons, in opposition to their taste and our own, and to no purpose ; to appear artful and insincere ; finally to find ourselves cold, languid, without relish for God, distracted in mind, so far removed from every sentiment of grace, that we are tempted to fall into despair. These are some examples of these sacrifices that now occur to me, but there are others without number that God tempers for each one according to his designs.

Let me not be told that these are vain and extravagant fancies. Can we doubt that God acts immediately in the soul ? Can we doubt that he acts there to make us die to self ? Can we doubt that God, after having taken away the gross passions, attacks within all the subtile reflections of self-love, especially in souls that have given themselves up generously, and without reserve, to the spirit of grace ? The more he wishes to purify them, the more he proves them within. The world has no eyes to see these trials, nor ears to hear them : but the world is blind ; its wisdom is only death ; it cannot sympathise with the spirit of truth. It is only the Spirit of God as the apostle says, that can penetrate the deep things of God.

At first we are not yet used to this inward operation, which is going to strip us completely. We would be silent, collected, endure all, suffer ourselves to be led by the course of Providence, like a man who should allow himself to be carried along by the current of a river. But we dare not yet venture to listen to the interior voice, for the sacrifice that God prepares. We are like the child Samuel who was not yet accustomed to the communications of the Lord. The Lord called him; he thought it was Eli; Eli said, "My child, you have dreamed; nobody speaks to you." Just so we know not whether it is not some imagination that would lead us too far. Often the high-priest Eli (that is to say, some guides) tells us that we have dreamed, and that we should remain at rest. But God doth not leave us thus, and awakens us till we lend an ear to what he would say.

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ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

CHRISTIAN perfection has not the strictness, the irksomeness, the constraint, that some imagine. It requires that we should be devoted to God from the depths of the heart ; and when we are thus his in the depths of the heart, all that is done for him becomes easy. Those who are God's without reserve are always contented ; for they wish only what God wills, and they wish to do for him all that he would have. They renounce all, and find a hundred fold in this renunciation. Peace of conscience, freedom of the heart, the sweetness of abandoning themselves to the hands of God, the joy of seeing the light always increasing in their hearts ; finally, deliverance from the tyrannical fears and desires of the world, form that hundred fold happiness that the true children of God possess in the midst of crosses, provided they are faithful.

They sacrifice themselves ; but to what they love most. They suffer ; but they are willing to suffer, and they prefer suffering to all their false joys. Their bodies are afflicted with sharp

pains. Their imaginations are troubled. Their minds fall into languor and fainting ; but the will is firm and tranquil in its inmost depths, and it says amen to all the blows with which God smites in order to sacrifice it.

What God demands of us is, a will no longer divided between him and any creature. It is a will pliant in his hands, which desires what God desires, and rejects only what he rejects ; which wishes without reserve all that he wills, and never wishes, under any pretext, what he does not will. When one is in this state, every thing is salutary. Even amusements, taken in this spirit, are turned into good works.

Happy he who gives himself to God. He is delivered from his passions ; from the judgments of men ; from their malignity ; from the tyranny of their maxims ; from their cold and miserable raillery ; from the unhappiness the world attributes to fortune ; from the unfaithfulness, the inconstancy of friends ; from the artifices and snares of enemies ; from his own weakness ; from the misery, the shortness of life ; from the horrors of a profane death ; from the cruel remorse attached to criminal pleasures ; and, finally, from the eternal condemnation of God.

The Christian is delivered from this innumerable multitude of evils, since, putting his will into the hands of God, he wishes only what God wills, and thus finds his consolation by faith, and consequently by hope in the midst of all his pains.

What weakness would it be, then, to fear to give oneself to God, and advance too far in a state so desirable !

Happy those who throw themselves unreservedly and blindly into the arms of the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, as St. Paul speaks. Then we desire nothing but to know what we owe to God, and we fear nothing except that we may not see sufficiently what he requires. As soon as we discover a new light in his law, we are transported with joy, like a miser who has found a treasure.

The true Christian, with whatever distress Providence overwhelms him, wishes all that happens to him, and wishes for nothing that he has not. The more he loves God, the more satisfied he is ; and the highest perfection, far from laying burdens on him, renders his yoke more light.

What folly to fear being too much devoted to

God ! It is to fear being too happy. It is to fear loving the will of God in all things. It is to fear having too much courage in inevitable crosses, too much consolation in the love of God, and too much detachment from the passions that render us miserable.

Let us despise, then, the things of earth, to be entirely God's. I do not say that we should quit them entirely ; for when we are already in a virtuous and regular life, only the depths of the heart are to be changed by loving, and we shall do nearly the same things we did before ; for God does not subvert the conditions of men, nor the duties that he has himself attached to them ; but we shall do, to serve God, what we did to serve and please the world, and satisfy ourselves. There will be only this difference, that, instead of being devoured by our pride, by our tyrannical passions, and the malignant censure of the world, we shall act, on the contrary, with freedom, with courage, with hope in God. Confidence will animate us. The expectation of eternal possessions, which are approaching while those of this world are escaping from us, will sustain us in the midst of sufferings. The love of God, that will make us feel the love he

has for us ; will give us wings to fly in his way, and rise above all our miseries.

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The Son of God says in general to all Christians, without exception ; let him who will be my disciple, take up his cross and follow me. The broad way leads to destruction. We must follow the narrow way, in which few enter. Only those, who do violence to themselves, obtain the kingdom of heaven. It is necessary to be born again, to renounce self, to hate oneself, to become a child, to be poor in spirit, to weep in order to be comforted, not to be of the world, which is cursed on account of its offences.

These truths affright many ; and this because they simply know what religion requires, without knowing what it presents, and because they are ignorant of the spirit of love, which renders all light. They know not that this religion leads to the highest perfection, by giving peace through a principle of love that softens all suffering.

Those who are devoted to God without reserve, are always happy. They experience that the yoke of Jesus Christ is easy and light ; that in him is found the rest of the soul ; and

that he gives relief to those who are weary and heavy-laden, as he has himself promised.

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The time approaches. It comes. It is here. Let us hasten to anticipate it. Let us love the eternal beauty which never grows old, and ever prevents those from growing old who love nothing but itself. Let us despise this unhappy world, which is already falling in ruin on all sides.

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This world, to which we are attached, we are about to leave. It is itself misery, vanity, and folly. It is but a phantom, and a fashion passing away, as St. Paul says.

THAT THE WAY OF NAKED FAITH AND PURE
CHARITY IS BETTER AND MORE SAFE THAN
THAT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SENSIBLE
ENJOYMENT.

THOSE who are attached to God, only so far as they taste pleasure and solace, resemble the people who followed Jesus Christ, not for his teaching, but for the loaves he miraculously

multiplied. They say, like St. Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here ; let us make three tabernacles." But they know not what they say. After having been intoxicated with the delights of Tabor, they deny the Son of God, and refuse to follow him upon Calvary. They not only seek sensible enjoyment, but wish also for illumination ; that is to say, the mind is curious to see, while the heart wishes to be moved by sweet and soothing feelings. Is this dying to self ? Is this the righteous man of St. Paul, of whom faith is the living nourishment ?

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This life of illumination and sensible fervor, when one is so much attached to it as to make it his exclusive object, is a very dangerous snare.

1. Whoever has no other support will quit prayer, and, with prayer, God himself, when this source of pleasure shall fail. You know that St. Therese said, that a great number of souls quitted prayer, when the prayer was beginning to be real. Now many souls, who, from having had in Jesus Christ a childhood too tender, too dependent on milk so sweet, fall back, and abandon the interior life, as soon as God begins to wean them. Should we be surprised

at this? They make the sanctuary of what is only the forecourt of the temple. They wish only an exterior death of the gross senses, in order to live a life of interior delights. Thence come so many infidelities and disappointments, even among souls that have appeared the most fervent and detached. The very persons that have talked most of detachment, death to self, of the darkness of faith and sacrifice, are often the most surprised and discouraged, when the trial comes, and the solace is withdrawn. Oh, how good it is to follow the way marked out by the blessed John of the Cross, who would have us believe in the not-having, and love without desiring to feel.

2. From the attachment to sensible enjoyment arise all illusions. Some souls are gross to that degree, that they need to feel, in order to find assurance. And yet this is all an error. What is matter of feeling deceives, it is a flattering bait for self-love. We have no fears of being wanting to God, while the pleasure lasts. We say then, in our abundance, we shall never be moved. But we think all lost when the intoxication is past. Thus we put our pleasure and our imagination in the place of

God. Pure faith alone preserves from illusion. When we lean upon nothing imagined, felt, enjoyed, luminous, and extraordinary ; when we cling to God alone in pure and naked faith, in the simplicity of the Gospel, receiving consolations that come to us, and resting upon none ; never judging, and always obeying ; easily believing that we may be deceived, and that others can correct us ; finally, acting each moment with simplicity and good intention, according to the light of faith actually present, we are in the way most opposite to illusion.

Practice will show, better than anything else, how much more safe this way is than that of fervor and extraordinary illumination. Whoever will choose to try it, will soon learn that this way of pure faith, followed in every thing, is the most profound and universal death to self. Interior fervors and interior assurance indemnify self-love for every outward sacrifice it may make. It is a subtile possession of self that gives a secret and refined life. But to suffer ourselves to be stripped outwardly and inwardly, at the same time ; outwardly by Providence and inwardly by the nakedness of obscure faith, is total martyrdom, and consequently the state

farthest removed from illusion. We deceive ourselves and are misled, only by flattering ourselves, by sparing ourselves, by reserving some secret life to self-love, by putting something disguised in the place of God. When you renounce all peculiar light, and every flattering enjoyment; when you wish only to love God without being anxious to have a conscious enjoyment of his presence, and to believe the truth of faith without being anxious to see, this destitution so dark leaves no hold to your own will, or your own judgment, which are the sources of all illusion.

Thus those who wish to guard against illusion by seeking to enjoy fervor, and to acquire certain assurance, are by this very means exposed to illusion. On the contrary, those who follow the drawings of the love that strips of all, and of pure faith, without seeking the light of knowledge and sensible fervors for their support, avoid that which can cause illusion and error. You will find in the Imitation of Christ, that the author says, that if God deprives you of interior delights, your pleasure should be to remain deprived of all pleasure.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THE true secret of our perfection is contained in those words of God to Abraham, "Walk before me and thou shalt be perfect."

The presence of God calms the mind, gives a tranquil sleep, and repose even during the day, in the midst of all our labors. But it is necessary to be devoted to God without reserve.

When one has found God, there is nothing more to seek for among men. It is necessary to make a sacrifice of one's best friends. The good friend is within the heart ; he is the spouse who is jealous, and drives away all the rest.

There is not need of much time to love God ; to renew ourselves in his presence, to raise our hearts toward him, or adore him in the depths of the heart ; to offer to him what is done, and what is suffered ; and this is that true kingdom of God within us that nothing can trouble.

When the distraction of the senses, and the activity of the imagination hinder the soul from collecting itself in a pleasant and sensible manner, we should at least calm ourselves

by the rectitude of the will ; then the desire of self recollection is a kind of recollection which is enough ; we should turn towards God, and do with a right intention all that he would that we should do.

We should endeavor to awaken in ourselves, from time to time, the desire of being devoted to God with all the extent of the powers of our souls ; that is to say, of our minds ; to know him and think of him, and of our wills to love him. Let us desire, too, that all our exterior senses may be consecrated to him in all their operations. Let us take care not to be occupied too long a time, either without or within, with things that cause so great distraction to the heart and to the mind, and which so draw both out of themselves, that it is difficult for them to return within to find God.

As soon as we feel that any foreign object gives us too much pleasure or joy, let us separate our hearts from it ; and to prevent them from taking its rest in the creature, let us present to them immediately their true object, sovereign good, which is God himself. In proportion as we shall be faithful to detach ourselves within from the creatures, that is to say, to hinder them from enter-

ing into the depths of the soul, which our Lord has reserved for himself that he may dwell there, and there be revered, adored, and loved, we shall soon taste the pure joy that God will not fail to give to a soul free, and disengaged from all human affection.

When we perceive in ourselves any eager desires for anything, whatever it may be, and when we perceive that our humor carries us with too much activity to anything that is to be done, were it only to say a word, to see an object, to take a step, let us stop short, and repress the precipitation of our thoughts and the agitation of our actions ; since God has said himself that his Spirit dwells not in disorder.

Let us take care not to take too great an interest in all things said and done, and not to be too much filled with them ; for it is a great source of distraction. As soon as we have seen what God demands of us in each thing that presents itself, let us confine ourselves to that, and separate ourselves from all the rest. Thereby we shall keep the depths of our souls always free and tranquil, and we shall retrench many useless things that embarrass our hearts, and hinder them from turning easily towards God.

An excellent means of keeping ourselves in interior solitude and freedom of mind is, at the end of each action to terminate with it all reflections, by dismissing all the returns of self-love, whether of vain joy or of sadness.

Happy he in whose mind nothing remains but what is necessary, and who thinks of each thing only when the time comes to think of it ; so that it is rather God who awakens the impression of it, by the sight of his will, which is to be performed, than the mind itself taking pains to anticipate and seek for it.

Finally, let us accustom ourselves to recall ourselves to ourselves, during the day, and in the course of our employments, by a simple view of God. Let us by this, calm all the movements of our hearts as soon as we see them agitated. Let us separate ourselves from all that does not come from God. Let us retrench useless thoughts and reveries. Let us not speak vain words. Let us seek God within us, and we shall infallibly find him, and with him joy and peace.

In our exterior employments let us be still more occupied with God than with all else. To discharge them well, it is necessary to discharge

them in his presence, and perform them all for him. At the sight of the majesty of God we should become calm within, and remain at rest. A word of the Saviour once calmed a furiously agitated sea. One look of his toward us, and of ours toward him should still produce the same effect every day.

We should often raise our hearts towards God. He will purify them. He will enlighten and direct them. It was the daily practice of the holy prophet David. "I had," said he, "the Lord always before me."

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We must not wait for the free hours, when we can shut the door. The moment that makes us regret, inward recollection will give us opportunity to practise it. We should turn our hearts towards God in a manner simple, familiar, and full of confidence. The moments the most interrupted are good, and at all times, even while eating or hearing others talk.

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We should read what is suited to our tastes and our wants; but this should be often interrupted to give place to the interior spirit that

leads to meditation. Two simple words, full of the Spirit of God, are the hidden manna. The words are forgotten, but they operate in secret. The soul is nourished and grows by them.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

ALL virtue consists essentially in having the will good. This is what Jesus means when he says, "the kingdom of God is within you." The matter is not to know much, to have great talents, nor even to do great actions ; all that is necessary is to have a heart, and to love.

Exterior works are the fruits and consequences of love ; and the source of good works is in the depths of the heart.

There are certain virtues that are for certain conditions, and not for others. Some are suitable at one time, and others at another. But a good will is suited to all times and places.

To wish all that God wishes, and to wish this for all times and for all circumstances, this is that kingdom of God that is wholly interior. It

is thereby that his kingdom comes, since his will is done on earth as in heaven, and we only will what his sovereign will inspires in ours.

Happy the poor in spirit ! Happy those who strip themselves of all, and even of their own will, so as no longer to belong to themselves. Oh, how poor in spirit, and in the depth of his inward being, is one when he is no longer his own, and is stripped of all that is opposed to God !

But how is it that the will becomes good ? By being conformed itself unreservedly to that of God. We wish all that he wills, and wish nothing that he does not will. We attach our feeble will to the almighty will that doth all, — thereby nothing can happen that we do not wish, for nothing can happen but what God wills, and we find in the good pleasure of God an inexhaustible source of peace and consolation.

The interior life is a commencement of the blessed peace of the saints who eternally say, amen !

We adore, we praise, we bless God for everything, we see him without ceasing in all things, and in all things ; his paternal hand is the only object with which we are occupied. There are

no longer any evils for us, since all things, even our most terrible sufferings, work together for good, as Paul says, to those who love God. Can we call the pains that God sends to purify us, and render us worthy of him, evils? What does us so great good, cannot be an evil.

Let us therefore cast all our cares into the bosom of so good a father, let us suffer him to do as he shall please. Let us content ourselves with following his will in all, and with putting ours in his so as to divest ourselves of it. It is not just that we should have anything for our own, we who are not our own. The slave has nothing of his own; how much more then should the creature that has of itself only nothingness and sin, and in whom every gift is pure grace, hold nothing in property as its own.

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We have nothing of our own but our will; all the rest is not ours. Sickness deprives us of health and life; riches are taken away from us by violence; the talents of the mind depend on the disposition of the body; the only thing that is truly our own is our will.

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Alas, how many souls are proprietors of them-

selves, who would like to do good, and love God, but according to their own taste and by their own motive, who would wish to give rules to God in the way of drawing them to him! They wish to serve him and possess him, but are not willing to give themselves to him and be possessed by him. What resistance does not God find in these souls, even when they appear so full of zeal and fervor! It is certain that in one sense their spiritual abundance becomes no obstacle; for they hold everything, even their virtues as their property, and with a continual seeking of themselves in what is good. Oh, how far above all those fervent and illuminated souls, who always wish to make progress in virtue their own way, is a soul truly poor, truly renouncing its own life and all its natural motions, thoroughly divested of all will so as to wish only what God gives it to will at each moment according to the rules of his gospel and the course of his providence.

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Let us pray the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, to take from us our own hearts, and not leave to us the least particle. So painful an operation costs much. It is very difficult

to yield ourselves to God, and remain under his hand when he cuts to the quick. But it is the patience of the saints and the sacrifice of pure faith.

Let us then suffer God to do with us all that he shall wish. Let there be no voluntary resistance, not even for a moment. As soon as we shall perceive the rebellion of the senses and of nature, let us turn toward God with confidence, and be on his side against timid and rebellious nature. Let us give it up to the spirit of God who will gradually bring death upon it. Let us watch in his presence against the slightest faults, so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit, who is jealous of all that passes within. Let us profit by the faults we have committed, by an humble sense of our misery, without discouragement and without weariness.

Can we better glorify God, than by renouncing ourselves and our whole will, to let him do with us according to his good pleasure? It is then that he is truly our God, and that his kingdom comes within us; when, independently of all exterior help, and all interior consolation, we regard both within and without, only the

hand of God which does all, and which we do not cease to adore.

To wish to serve him in one place rather than another, by such or such a way, and not by an opposite one, is to wish to serve him in our way and not in his. But to be equally ready for all, to wish everything and wish nothing; to leave oneself like a toy in the hands of Providence; to set no limits to this submission, as the dominion of God cannot suffer any, is to serve him by renouncing self; it is to treat him only as God, and treat ourselves as creatures made only for him.

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Let us then open our hearts; but let us open them without measure, that God and his love may enter into them without measure, like a flood. Let us fear nothing in the path we are walking. God will lead us as if by the hand; provided we do not doubt, and we are more filled with his love, than with fear with reference to ourselves.

ON GRATITUDE.

THAT forgetfulness of self, which is often spoken of for the souls who wish to seek God generously, is not inconsistent with gratitude for his benefits. And for this reason, that this forgetfulness does not consist in never seeing anything in reference to self; but only in not remaining shut up in self, occupied with one's own good or evil, by a view of property or self love. It is this being occupied with ourselves, (which is indeed too natural,) that withdraws us from pure and simple love, narrows our hearts, and carries us away from our true perfection, by making us seek it with eagerness, with uneasiness and anxiety, from the love of ourselves. But although we forget ourselves, that is to say, no longer seek voluntarily our own interest, we do not fail to see ourselves on many occasions. We do not look at ourselves from the love of self, but the sight of God which we seek, often gives us as if by reflection a certain sight of ourselves. It is like a man looking at another, behind whom is a large mirror; in look-

ing at the other, he sees himself, and finds himself without seeking it. Thus is it in the pure light of God, that we see ourselves perfectly.

The presence of God, when it is pure, simple, and sustained by a fidelity of soul, is that great mirror in which we discover even the slightest stain in our souls.

A peasant confined to his village knows but imperfectly its meanness; but show him rich palaces, a splendid court, he feels all the poverty of his village, and cannot endure his tatters at the sight of so much magnificence. It is thus that we see our deformity and nothingness, in the beauty and infinite greatness of God.

Show as much as you please, the vanity and nothingness of the creature, by the defects of created things; set forth the brevity and uncertainty of life, the inconstancy of fortune, the unfaithfulness of friends, the illusion of great place, the bitterness that is inseparable from it, the disappointment of the noblest hopes, the emptiness of all the good we possess, the reality of all the evils we suffer: all these topics of morality, however true and affecting they may be, do but graze the heart; they do not penetrate

beneath the surface ; the real character of the man, the depths of the heart, are not changed by them. He sighs to see himself thus the slave of vanity, and still continues in this bondage. But if the ray of the divine light enlightens him within, he sees in the abyss of good, which is God, the abyss of nothingness and evil that the corrupt creature is. He despises himself, hates himself, forsakes himself, flies himself, fears himself, renounces himself, abandons himself to God, loses himself in him.

Happy loss ! for then without seeking, he finds himself. He has no longer any selfish and human interest, and everything turns to his profit ; for all things work together for good, to those who love God. He sees the mercies that come into this abyss of weakness, of nothingness and sin ; he sees and takes delight in this view. Observe that those who are not yet very far advanced in the renunciation of themselves, still regard this course of divine mercies with reference to their own spiritual advantage, in proportion as they still cling more or less to themselves. But as the entire abnegation of one's own will is very rare in this life, there are also very few souls that do not still regard received mercies, with reference to the fruits that they

receive from them for themselves, so that these souls, though they aim to have no longer any selfish interest, still do not fail to be very sensible to this great interest.

They are delighted to see an all-powerful hand that has snatched them from themselves ; that has delivered them from their own desires ; that has broken their bonds when they were bent only on plunging deeper into their slavery ; that has saved them, so to speak, in spite of themselves ; and has taken pleasure in doing them as much good, as they did evil to themselves.

Souls entirely pure and divested of self, such as those of the holy in heaven, would regard with as much love and complacency the mercies imparted to others, as the mercies they have received themselves ; for reckoning themselves no longer as anything, they love as much the good pleasure of God, the riches of his grace, and the glory that he derives from the sanctification of others, as that which he derives from their own. All is then equal, because self is lost and annihilated ; the Me is no more myself than others ; God alone is all in all in us ; it is he that is loved, that is admired, and forms all the joy of the heart in this celestial and disin-

terested love. We are ravished with his mercies, not for love of ourselves, but for love of him. We thank him for having done his will, and glorified himself, as we ask of him in prayer that he will deign to perform his will and give glory to his name. In this state it is no longer for ourselves that we ask, nor for ourselves that we give thanks. But until this blessed state comes, the soul, still holding to self, is moved with affectionate gratitude by this relic of reference to self. All of this reference that still remains, excites a lively gratitude ; this gratitude is a love still a little mixed, and having a reference to self ; whereas the gratitude of souls lost in God, like that of the saints in heaven, is love without bounds ; a love without reference to selfish interests ; a love as much transported by the mercies imparted to others, as by those bestowed upon ourselves ; a love that admires and receives the gifts of God only for the pure interest of the glory of God himself.

But as nothing is more dangerous than to wish to go beyond the measures of one's state, nothing would be more hurtful to a soul, that needs to be sustained by sentiments of gratitude, than to deprive itself of this nourishment that is

suited to it, and run after the ideas of a higher perfection, which are not yet suited to it, and which are found only in Heaven. When the soul is touched by the remembrance of all that God has done for it, it is a certain mark that it has need of this remembrance, even supposing it has in this remembrance a certain interested joy with regard to its own happiness. We should allow this joy in all its liberty and all its extent; for love although interested, sanctifies the soul, and we should patiently wait for God to come and purify it himself. It would be to anticipate him, and undertake what is reserved for him alone, to wish to take from man all the motives in which his own interest mingles with that of God.

Man himself ought not to constrain his heart in this matter, or renounce before the time the supports of which his infirmity has need. The child that attempts to walk before he is allowed to go alone, will soon fall. It is not for him to throw aside the leading strings with which his nurse supports him.

Let us then live on gratitude, while gratitude, even interested, shall serve to nourish our hearts. Let us love the mercies of God, not only from

love of him and his glory, but also from love of ourselves and our eternal happiness, while this view shall have for us a certain support suited to our condition. If afterward God opens our hearts to a love more pure and more generous, to a love that refers to him directly, that sees only his glory, let us suffer ourselves to be drawn alone without delay or hesitation, to this so perfect love.

If then we love the mercies of God ; if they ravish us with joy and admiration ; by the pleasure solely of seeing God so good and so great, if we are no longer affected, except by the fulfilment of his will, by his glory that he finds as pleaseth him, by the greatness with which he makes a vessel of honor of that which was a vessel of dishonor ; let us render thanks to him still more willingly, since the benefit is greater, and since the purest of all the gifts of God, is loving his gifts only for him, and without seeking ourselves.

THAT LOVE ALONE KNOWS HOW TO ENDURE
SUFFERINGS TRULY, AND TO LOVE
SUFFERINGS.

WE know that we need, and that we deserve to suffer; and yet we are always surprised at suffering, as if we thought that we neither deserve nor need it. True and pure love alone loves to suffer, inasmuch as true and pure love alone makes an entire self-surrender. Resignation leads us to endure sufferings; but there is in it something that suffers from this endurance of suffering, and which resists. Resignation that gives nothing to God but with measure and with reflection upon self, indeed wishes to suffer, but is often examining itself from fear of bearing trial ill. Properly speaking, there are, as it were, two different persons in resignation; one subdues the other, and watches over it to keep it from revolting. In the pure love, that is a state of entire renunciation and self-surrender, the soul nourishes itself in silence, with the cross and the union with Christ crucified, without any reflection or sensibility upon its suffering. There is nothing but one single, simple will, that

yields itself for God to see it, such as it is, and without seeking to see itself. It says nothing, it observes nothing. What does it then? It suffers. Is that all? Yes, that is all; it has nothing to do but to suffer. Love shows itself well enough, without speaking, and without thinking. It does the only thing it has to do, which is to wish for nothing, when every consolation fails. A will satisfied with that of God while all else is taken from it, is the most pure of all loves.

What a relief then to think, that we need not give ourselves so much anxiety in order to quicken ourselves continually to patience, and to be always on our guard, and anxious, in order to support outwardly the character of an accomplished virtue. It is sufficient to be little and entirely submissive in grief. It is not courage; it is something more and less; less in the eyes of the mass of virtuous men; more in the sight of pure faith. It is a littleness in itself, that puts the soul in all the greatness of God. It is a weakness that takes away all strength in oneself, and gives the omnipotence of God. "When I am weak," says St. Paul, "then am I strong; — I can do all things through him that

strengtheneth me." Then it is sufficient to nourish oneself with some short reading, suited to our condition and our taste, but often interrupted to relieve the senses, and give place for the interior spirit that produces recollection. Sometimes we suffer almost without knowing that we suffer; at other times we suffer, and we find that we endure our trials ill, and we support our impatience, as a second cross heavier than the first; but nothing is an impediment, because true love is continually going on, not walking by its own strength, and counting itself as nothing. Then are we truly happy. The cross is no longer a cross, when there is no longer a *Me* to suffer it, and which appropriates to itself, its blessings and its evils.

DISINTERESTED AND INTERESTED LOVE HAVE
EACH THEIR SEASON.

WHY do we like better to see the gifts of God in ourselves than in others, if it is not from attachment to self? Whoever loves better to see them in himself than in others, will be dis-

tressed also at seeing them in others more perfect than in himself; and this is jealousy. What then should we do? We should rejoice that God does his will in us, and reigns in us, less for our own happiness, or our perfection, in so far as it is ours, than for his good pleasure and his pure glory.

Observe in this matter two things; the one, that all this is not an extravagant subtilty; for God who wishes to strip the soul, in order to lead it to perfection, and urge it on without respite, to the purest love, really makes it pass through these trials of itself, and does not leave it at rest, until he has taken from its self-love all reference to self, all support in itself. Nothing is so jealous, so severe, so scrupulous, as this principle of pure love. It cannot suffer a thousand things that are imperceptible to us in a common state. And what pious persons in general call over-refinement, appears an essential thing to a soul that wishes to get entirely free from self. It is like gold that is purified in the crucible; the fire consumes all that is not the pure gold. Thus, it is necessary that there should be a kind of universal fusing of the heart to purify the divine love.

The second thing to be observed is, that God does not lead on all souls to this extent in this life. There are very many pious souls that he suffers to retain some reference to self. This reference even sustains them in the practice of virtues, and serves to purify to a certain extent.

Nothing would be more indiscreet and more dangerous, than to deprive them of this consoling habit of regarding the graces of God, with reference to their own improvement. The first persons have a disinterested gratitude ; they glorify God for what he does in them, for his pure glory alone. The last regard themselves also in them, and unite their interest to that of God. If the first wished to take from the others this mixture, and this support in themselves with reference to the gifts of grace, they would do the same harm, as if one should wean a child that is not yet able to eat ; to take from it the breast is to kill it. We should never wish to deprive a soul of that which still nourishes it, and which God leaves it to support its weakness. To wish to anticipate a gift of grace is to destroy it. This class of persons, on the other hand, should not condemn the others because they do not see them occupied like them-

selves, with their own perfection in the graces that they receive. God does in each what pleaseth him ; the spirit blows where it lists, and as it lists. The forgetfulness of self, in the pure sight of God, is a state in which God can do all that is most agreeable to him. What is important is, that the second sort of persons be not curious about the state of the others ; and that the others do not wish to make known to them the trials that belong not to their condition, before God calls them to them.

ON TRUE LIBERTY.

WHEN we are not embarrassed by disquieting reference to self, we begin to be free with a true liberty.

On the contrary, false wisdom, which is always on the stretch, always occupied with itself, always jealous of its own perfection, suffers a cutting pain, whenever it sees in itself the least blemish.

Not that the man who is simple and detached from self, does not labor for his own perfection ; he labors for it so much the more, as he forgets himself the more ; and as he thinks of virtues, only in order to fulfil the will of God. The fault, which in us is the source of all others, is the love of self to which we refer all, instead of referring all to God. Whoever therefore labors to become free from self, to forget himself, to renounce himself, according to the precept of Jesus Christ, cuts up at a single stroke the root of all vices, and finds in this renunciation of self, the germ of all virtues.

Then we understand and experience within ourselves the profound truth of that saying of the Scripture, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We neglect nothing to *establish* the kingdom of God within us, and without ; but we are at peace in the midst of the humiliation caused by our faults. We would choose rather to die, than voluntarily commit the slightest fault ; but we fear not the judgment of men for the interest of our own reputation. We devote ourselves to the reproach of Jesus Christ, and remain at peace in the uncertainty of events. As respects the judgments of God,

we give ourselves up to them, imploring his mercies, according to the different degrees either of confidence, or sacrifice, or entire renunciation of self. The more entire the surrender we make, the more peace we find ; and this peace gives such freedom to the heart, that we are prepared for everything, we wish everything and wish nothing, and are simple as little children.

The light of God makes us feel even the slightest faults, but it does not discourage. We walk before him ; but if we stumble, we hasten to resume our way, and only think of advancing continually. Oh, how happy is this simplicity ! But there are few souls that have the courage never to look behind them. Like Lot's wife, they draw down upon themselves the curse of God, by this anxious turning back of a jealous and sensitive self-love.

We must lose what remains of the old man within us, if we wish to find ourselves again in God. It is to the little ones, that Jesus Christ declares that his kingdom belongs. Not to reason too much, to advance toward the good by an upright intention in common things ; to dismiss a thousand reflections, by which we become wrapped up, and plunged deeper in self, under

pretext of correcting ourselves ; such are in general the principal means of being free with a true liberty, without neglecting our duties.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

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A GENERAL rule for employing our time well, is to accustom ourselves to live in a continual dependence on the spirit of God, and his law ; receiving from moment to moment, what he is pleased to give us ; consulting him in the doubts, in which it is necessary to choose our course at once ; recurring to him in those seasons of weakness, in which virtue faints ; invoking him, and lifting ourselves towards him, when the heart, seduced by sensible objects, sees itself drawn imperceptibly from its road, and discovers itself in a state of forgetfulness of God, and distance from him.

Happy the soul that, by a sincere renunciation of self, keeps itself ever in the hands of its Creator, ready to do all his will, and is not weary

of saying to him a hundred times a day ; “ Lord what wouldst thou have me to do ? Teach me to do thy holy will, because thou art my God. Thou wilt show that thou art my God, by teaching me ; and I, that I am thy creature, by obedience. In what hands, great God, shall I be better than in thine ? Away from them, my soul is always exposed to the attacks of its enemies, and my welfare is always in danger. I am nothing but ignorance and weakness ; and I should hold my ruin certain, if thou shouldst leave me to my own conduct, disposing at my own will of the precious time thou givest me to sanctify myself, and walking blindly in the ways of my own heart. In this state how could I but make a bad choice every hour ? And what could I effect in myself but a work of self-love, sin and condemnation. Send then, Oh Lord ! thy light to guide my steps, impart to me thy grace, on all occasions, according to my wants, as children have their food apportioned to them according to their age and weakness. Teach me by a holy use of the present time, to repair the past, and never foolishly reckon on the future.”

Times of business, and exterior occupation, in order to be well employed, only need a simple

attention to the directions of divine Providence ; since it is that which prepares them for us, and presents them to us, we have only to follow it with docility, and submit entirely to God, our temper, our own will, our fastidiousness, our anxiety, our reference to self ; or on the other hand, all overflowing of the heart, the precipitation, the vain joy, and other passions that come in its way, according as the things that we have to deal with are agreeable or troublesome to us. We must take good care not to suffer ourselves to be overwhelmed by what comes from without, and not to be drowned in the multitude of exterior occupations, whatever they may be.

We should endeavor to begin all our undertakings with reference to the pure glory of God ; continue them without dissipation of mind ; and finish them without eagerness, and without impatience.

The times of conversations and amusements are the most dangerous for us, and perhaps the most useful for others ; we ought in these to be on our guard, that is to say, more faithful in the presence of God. The practice of Christian watchfulness, so much recommended by our Lord ; the aspirations and elevation of mind and

heart toward God, not only habitual but actual, as far as possible, by the simple views that faith gives ; the sweet and peaceful dependence that the soul maintains toward the grace, which it recognises as the only sure principle of its strength ; all this must then be employed to preserve ourselves from the subtile poison, often hidden under conversations and pleasures, and to know how to employ wisely, what can instruct and edify others.

Seasons of leisure are generally the most agreeable and useful for ourselves ; we can hardly employ them better, than by consecrating them to repair our strength (I mean even our bodily strength,) by a more secret and intimate communion with God. Prayer is so necessary, and the source of so many blessings, that the soul which has found this treasure cannot help returning to it whenever it is left to itself.

ON TOO GREAT SENSIBILITY UNDER SUFFERINGS.

THIS sensibility does not depend on ourselves. God gives it to us with our temperament, in order to exercise us. He would not deliver us from it, but, on the contrary, make use of it for our sanctification. Let us therefore enter into his designs. Trials are necessary for us ; the only thing important for us is not to sink under them. Inward trials, are like those from without, they all tend to lead us to victory through combat. Inward temptations are indeed the more profitable, inasmuch as they serve more directly to humble us, by the experience of our inward corruption. Those from without only go to show us the malignity of the world about us. Those from within, make us feel that we too are as depraved as the rest of the world.

Let us bear them with humble confidence and peace. Our inward agitations, and all the trials that arise from the depths of our hearts, as well as the storms that assail us from abroad, all come equally from the hand of God, who knows how to make use of ourselves, as well as of

others, to make us die to self. Often our pride is disturbed and discouraged, at seeing so many revolts remaining obstinately within us ; while it would wish to see its passions in subjection, in order to nourish itself with this glory, and take pleasure in its own perfection.

Let us endeavor to be faithful in the depths of the will, notwithstanding the repugnances and agitations of nature ; and let us yield to the purpose of God, when he would show us by these tempests, to what shipwrecks we should be exposed, if his powerful hand did not save us from them.

But even if it happen to us to fall voluntarily through frailty, let us humble, let us abase ourselves ; let us correct ourselves without pity for ourselves, let us not lose a moment in returning to God ; but let us do it simply and without agitation ; let us rise up again and go on our way with resolution, without being vexed or discouraged on account of our fall.

OF THE CROSSES IN A CONDITION OF PROSPERITY, HIGH STATION, AND GREATNESS.

GOD gives some crosses of iron, and of lead, which are overwhelming in themselves; some he forms for us of straw, that seem to weigh nothing, and yet which are no less difficult to bear; some he makes of gold and precious stones, which dazzle spectators and excite the envy of the world, but which are no less crucifying than the most despised crosses. He makes them of all things we love most, and turns them to bitterness. High station brings with it constraint, and weariness; it gives what we do not wish, and takes away what we should choose.

A poor man who wants bread, has a cross of lead in his extreme poverty. God knows how to temper the greatest prosperity with like miseries. In this prosperity we suffer as keen a hunger for liberty and consolation, as the poor man suffers for bread; and he in his suffering can at least knock at every door, and excite the compassion of passers by; but people in high station, in *their* poverty, are ashamed and venture not to ask compassion, or seek any re-

lief. God is often pleased to add bodily infirmity to this servitude of the mind in high station. Nothing is more profitable, than these two crosses united. They crucify the man from head to foot. He feels his own weakness, and the worthlessness of all he possesses. The world sees not your cross, for it observes nothing but a little constraint softened by authority ; and some slight indisposition, that it may suspect to spring from too great delicacy. At the same time you see in your condition nothing but bitterness, coldness, weariness, slavery, discouragement, pain, impatience. All that dazzles spectators, at a distance disappears to the eyes of the possessor, and God in reality crucifies him, while all the world envies his happiness. Thus Providence knows how to lay on us the most various trials in every condition. Without falling from this high rank, and without calamities, we may swallow the cup of bitterness ; and it is swallowed to its bitterest dregs, in the golden cups that are served at the table of kings. God takes pleasure in thus confounding human power, which is but disguised weakness. Happy he who sees these things with the eyes of the mind, enlightened as St. Paul speaks.

Station you see and feel gives no true solace. It has no power against the ordinary ills of nature. It adds many new and very painful ones to those of nature itself already miserable enough.

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But religion turns to profit all the burdens of greatness. It takes it but as a slavery ; and it is in the love of this slavery that it finds a liberty as much more true, as it is unknown to men.

We should find no good in prosperity, but that which the world cannot recognise in it ; I mean its crosses. High station is exempt from none of the sufferings of nature. It brings with it great ones of its own ; and besides prevents our receiving those solaces that we might in a condition of obscurity.

Thus, God would render ridiculous and fearful, what the world admires most ; thus, he treats without sparing, those whom he elevates without measure, to make them serve as an example. Thus he wishes to render the cross complete, by placing it in the most dazzling station to bring contempt on worldly honor ; and happy are they who in this condition view the hand of God, which through mercy crucifies them !

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In this state there is but little to be done. God needs not that we should say many words to him, nor that we should form many thoughts. He sees our hearts sometimes submissive and desirous to love him, and this is enough; he can see our suffering and our submission. We have no need to repeat, every moment, to a person whom we love, I love you with all my heart. It often happens even, that we are a long time without thinking of our love for him, and yet love him no less at such times, than when we are making the tenderest protestations. The true love reposes in the depths of the breast; it is simple, peaceable, sometimes silent. We often confuse ourselves by multiplying unreasonable words and reflections. This sensible love is only a heated imagination.

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We should not disquiet ourselves to procure an artificial presence of God and his truths. It is sufficient to abide simply in these dispositions of the heart, and to be willing to be crucified; or at most it is enough to have a view, simple, and without effort, that is remembered whenever we shall be inwardly admonished of it by a certain remembrance, which is a sort of waking of the heart.

Thus the sufferings of high station, the pains of illness, and inward imperfections even, if they are borne peaceably and with humility, are the only antidote of a condition, which is in itself so dangerous. In apparent prosperity there is nothing good but the hidden cross. O cross ! O blessed cross ! I embrace thee, I adore in thee the dying Jesus with whom I too must die.

FOR THE DAYS OF THE CHURCH.

DAY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

OH, Jesus ! I desire to repose with John on thy bosom, and resting my heart on thine, be nourished with love. I wish, like the beloved disciple, to be instructed by thy love. This disciple said from his own experience, "*the anointing teaches all things.*" This interior anointing by thy spirit, teaches in silence. — We love, and know all that we need to know ; we taste and have no need to hear anything. Every human word is burdensome, and serves but to distract, because we have within the

substantial word which feeds the soul in its inmost depths. We find in it all truth. We see but one thing, which is simple and universal truth. It is God before whom the creature, that deceitful nothing, disappears and leaves no trace of its illusion.

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Love decides all cases, and is never mistaken ; for it gives nothing to man and refers all to God alone. It is a consuming fire that embraces all, consumes all, annihilates all, and makes of its victim a perfect holocaust. Oh, how true the knowledge of God which it gives ! for it suffers us to see nought but him, but with a view very different from that of men who consider him only in cold and dry speculation. Then we love all that we see : and love gives piercing eyes to see it. A moment of peace and silence shows to us more wonders than the profound reflections of all the learned.

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Oh, Jesus ! I have no teacher but thee, no book but thy heart ! There I learn all by becoming ignorant of all, and annihilating myself. There I live the same life that thou dost live in the bosom of thy Father. I live on love : love does

all in me. It is for love above all that I was created, and I accomplish the purpose of God in my creation only so far as I love. I know therefore all, and wish to know nought but thee. Be silent, wise and curious world; I have found on the bosom of Jesus the ignorance and foolishness of his cross, in comparison with which all your talents are but dross.

FOR LENT.

It is now for me, Oh God! a season of privation and abstinence. But it is nothing to fast from the gross viands that nourish the body, if we do not at the same time fast from all that serves as the aliment of self-love. Give me then, Oh spouse of souls! that interior virginity, that purity of heart, that separation from every created thing, that sobriety of which thy apostle speaks, by which no creature is used, except according to our need, as sober people use food. Oh, blessed fast! in which the soul holds the senses deprived of all that is superfluous. Oh, holy abstinence! in which the soul satisfied with the will of God, is no longer nourished by its own will. It has, like Jesus, other meat to eat.

Give me, Oh Lord ! that bread which is above all substance, that bread which will forever appease the hunger of my heart ; that bread which appeases every desire ; that bread which is the true manna, and supplies the place of all else.

Oh, my God ! let the creatures then be silent for me, and I for them, in this holy time ! Let my soul be nourished in silence, fasting from all vain discourse. May I be nourished from thee alone, and the cross of thy son Jesus.

But what ! must I be in continual fear of breaking this interior fast, by the consolations I might receive from without ? No, no, my God ; thou wouldst not have this constraint and anxiety. This spirit is a spirit of love and of liberty, and not a spirit of fear and servitude. I will renounce then everything that is not according to thine order for my condition ; everything which I find distracts me too much ; and everything those who are my guides to thee judge I should retrench : and, finally, whatever thou shalt retrench thyself, by the events of thy Providence. I will bear all these privations peacefully, and I will add this moreover, in innocent and necessary conversation, I will retrench whatever thou

shalt make me feel within, to be only a seeking of myself. When I shall feel myself led to make any sacrifice in these things, I will do it cheerfully. But in other respects, I know thou wishest that a heart that loves thee should be at ease. I will act with confidence, like a child playing in the arms of its mother. I will rejoice before the Lord. I will try to make others rejoice. I will open my heart without fear in the assembly of the children of God. All I wish is candor, innocence, and the joy of the holy spirit. Far from me then, Oh God ! be that gloomy and fearful wisdom which ever torments itself, which always holds in its hand the balance to weigh atoms for fear of breaking this interior fast. It is unjust to thee not to act toward thee in a simple and childlike manner ; this rigor is unworthy of thy compassion. Thou wouldst have us love thee alone ; on this point thou art jealous ; but when one loves thee, thou sufferest the love to act freely, and thou canst see what proceeds from this.

I will fast then, Oh, my God ! from all will that is not thine : but I will fast through love, in the liberty and abundance of my heart. Woe to the soul shut up, straitened, and chilled in itself, which

fears everything, and which through fear has no time to love, and run generously after the spouse.

Oh, how strict the fast, to which without constraint, thou dost lead the soul ! There remains to the heart nothing but the Beloved, and often this Beloved is hidden from the soul, to leave it as if fainting and ready to expire. This is that severe fast in which the man sees his naked poverty : for even the least remnant of life in himself is taken from him. Oh, severe fast of true faith ! who shall comprehend thee ? Where is the soul courageous enough to fulfil thee ? Oh, universal privation ! Oh, renunciation of oneself, as well as of the vainest outward things ! Oh, fidelity of a soul that forsakes itself to follow thee without reserve through jealous love, and suffers all to be taken from it ! Such, Oh Lord ! is the sacrifice of those who worship thee in spirit and in truth. It is by such trials that one becomes worthy of thee. Oh Lord ! render my soul empty, hungry and fainting. Do according to thy good pleasure. I am silent, I adore. I say without ceasing, Let thy will, not mine be done. I wish for nought but thee, Oh God !

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